



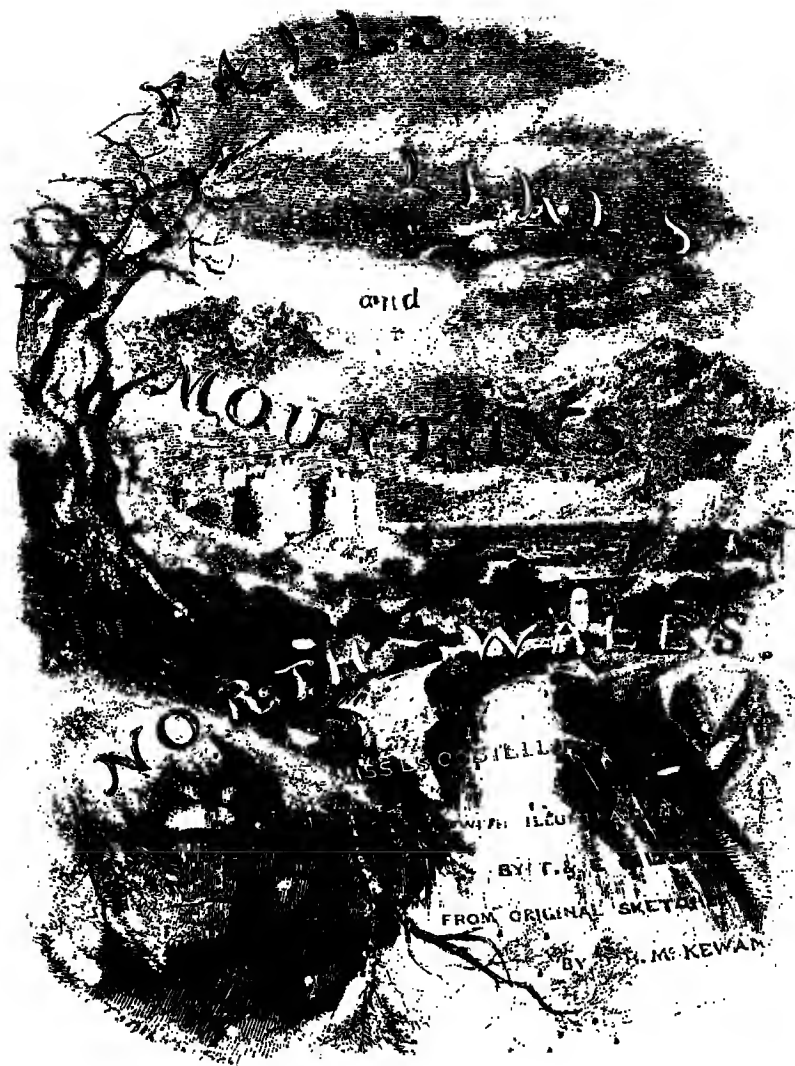




THE  
FALLS, LAKES, AND MOUNTAINS,  
OF  
NORTH WALES.







LONDON: LONGMAN, & CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.



THE  
FALLS, LAKES, AND MOUNTAINS,  
OF  
NORTH WALES.

BY  
LOUISA STUART COSTELLO,

AUTHOR OF

"A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES," "A PILGRIMAGE TO AUVERGNE,"  
"BEARN AND THE PYRENEES," ETC., ETC.

No, never shall my soul forget  
The friends I found so cordial-hearted;  
Dear shall be the day we met,  
And dear shall be the time we parted.—MOORE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
THOMAS AND EDWARD GILKS,

FROM ORIGINAL SKETCHES BY

D. H. McKEWAN.

LONDON:  
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

M.DCCC.XLV.

LONDON  
Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FEEY,  
Dangor House, Shoe Lane.



TO THE  
LADY SARAH HAY WILLIAMS,

OF  
BODELWYDDAN CASTLE,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY  
HER LADYSHIP'S  
GRATEFUL, OBLIGED, AND AFFECTIONATE,  
HUMBLE SERVANT,

LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the present work the object has been to present to the Traveller, and the lover of the Picturesque, in a portable form, a graphic and correct portraiture of this beautiful and historically important portion of Great Britain: to give to every site its legends and poetical associations, revive the recollections attached to it, and to do for the region of the Harp and the Bard, what has been done for its brother-land of Brittany: to beguile the fatigues of travel, and to supply information on the spot, without the necessity of extensive research, and also to amuse the leisure of those who may desire to become acquainted with the most alluring scenes of Nature without seeking for them abroad.

MAY 1, 1845.





in the heart of France, or the craggy and precipitous Pyrenees, ascending to romantic Spain. There are dark and  
~~silent shores~~

“ Whose gloomy shore  
 Sky-lark never warbled o’er—”

as well as lakes all sunshine. There are cataracts which bound over beetling rocks with thundering roar,

“ Charming the eye with dread :”

and torrents that sweep along for miles with foaming speed, as well as rivers that glide softly and gently through enamelled meads, reflecting every form of beauty in their clear waters,—waters not of that transparent aqua-marine tint which delights the eye in the Pyrenean valleys, but of a deep, dark, rich colour, like the brown cairn-gorme.

Then the Castles of Wales, which rise boldly from lofty rocks, or lie menacing on the rugged shores, are as fine, and frequently as grand and picturesque, as any the Loire, the Garonne, or the Rhine can show. The Druid, the Roman, and the triumphant Norman have each their shrines, and eternal Nature still keeps her court amidst the fastnesses where Llywelyn and Glendowr fought for freedom.

From coast to coast, all along from gloomy Flint and beautiful Conway to Caernarvon, Harlech, and ruined Aberystwith, where South Wales begins, the land teems with majestic fabrics, erected by powerful tyranny to overawe and oppress

the true-hearted natives, and in every valley, by every lake, rise towers and turrets full of mysterious interest. Though the history of Wales has been too much neglected, and from the period of the conqueror Edward to that of the outrages of Cromwell, little is recorded, there are not wanting traditions and wild stories attached to every spot, and adding an additional charm to the scene.

The railroad in a few short hours now brings the traveller from the very heart of London and its confusion to the quiet, old, romantic town of Chester, and he suddenly finds himself in another world in striking contrast to that he so lately left behind.

He beholds a city of an age gone by, completely walled and protected by towers, realizing the portraits of such in illuminated manuscripts of the middle ages: he sees rows of striped and carved houses half-concealed by curious arcades, which run up and down over the surface of the buildings:—now he mounts ladder-like steps and descends again, only to remount and wander along, under roofs so low that he can scarcely hold his head erect as he passes, peering into the closely packed shops where but little light can enter: he finds the streets below rudely paved, like an old continental town, and he gazes on the ragged and time-worn walls of the crumbling churches scarcely believing that he is still in England.

Liverpool, the Great Modern, brings him back to reality, for a railroad will transport him from Chester to that won-

drous mart, unrivalled in the world, in an incredibly short space of time.

But it is from Chester that the tourist's journey to North Wales ought to begin; and, after he has paid a visit to Eaton Hall, the most elegant of all the incongruous imaginings of the present day, which delight to place Gothic abodes, rich in tracery and gilding, in the midst of parterres and deer-parks—he will hasten to cross the frontier to Hlwarden, where a pretty modern castle, placed in a lovely situation, is backed by the first antique ruined fortress he has yet seen in Wales.

This we did, when, in the summer of 1844, we commenced a tour in this beautiful and interesting country.

I should recommend to the traveller to pursue the route we chose, entering North Wales by Chester, and quitting it by the fine, old town of Shrewsbury; as, by this means, he becomes acquainted with the most striking objects in proper succession, and, after the bold features of the region of Snowdon, he enjoys the more the quiet grace of the vale of Llangollen. Whichever way it may, however, please the wanderer to take, he is certain to be more gratified in this tour than in almost any other on so small a scale: for all the sights of North Wales may be well seen in a month, although we allowed ourselves to linger amongst her valleys and mountains a whole summer.

## CHAPTER I.

Hawarden.—Llywelyn and Eleonore de Montford.—The Dee.—Flint.—Holywell.—St. Winefred.—Miracles.—The Monks of Shrewsbury.—A Name. Basingwerk.—The Constable's Sands.—Maes Glâs.—St. Asaph.—Vale of Clwyd.—Bodelwyddan.—The young Lawyer.



A WARDEN CASTLE is a fine ruin, on an eminence above the modern dwelling, in the charming park of Sir Stephen Glynne, where the lawns and graceful hills covered with luxuriant trees are extremely inviting. We wandered about there on a warm summer day in uninterrupted solitude, and enjoyed the fine view from the broken towers, festooned with shining ivy: nothing disturbed the stillness but the murmuring of the numerous bees, which seemed to delight in the warm spot, and who for a time forsook the rich gardens of roses which had attracted them below. Presently, however, we heard a low booming sound, which we mistook for the organ of the distant church; but on descending from the castle height our romance was dispelled, by finding that it was the noise of an iron foundry, so close to the gardens that the smoke sweeps over them, and greatly destroys the effect we had been admiring.

In this castle, once a fortress of importance, where nothing now remains entire, and little but a part of the keep can be traced, Llywelyn, the hero of Wales, and her last prince, held a conference with the revolted Simon de Montford, who had sided with him against the conquering Edward the First, and in these walls was signed a peace between Wales and Cheshire, not fated long to endure. Probably it was here that young Llywelyn first saw the infant beauty Eleonore, daughter of Montford, whom he never afterwards forgot: she was then promised him as a bride, when her age was more matured, and the youthful lover saw her depart for France, to her convent at Montargis, with a pang which his present successes could scarcely remove. Edward, then a discomfited foe, captive to the proud and over-weening Montford, heard in his prison cell of the promise given to his rival, and resolved if possible to thwart his hopes: fortune afterwards gave him the power, and for many years he detained the fair and constant Eleonore from him she loved. At length, he made her the means of reconciliation and took advantage of the passion of Llywelyn to gain his object at the expense of the lover's interest. Eleonore was granted to the Welsh Prince, and Edward triumphed in his successful art. For a time the married pair lived only for happiness, and the murmurs of Llywelyn's subjects were scarcely heeded. Whenever Edward's aggressions and oppressions roused her husband to resistance, Eleonore's voice was raised to obtain peace, and

more than once she succeeded ; but relentless Fate, which had already spoken the doom of Wales, removed the only barrier between the foes. Eleonore died in giving birth to a daughter, and Llywelyn, after little more than two years of blissful dreaming, found himself desolate.

From the towers of Hawarden, then so joyous to the lover and the father of Eleonore, now as ruined as their frail hopes—the waters of the silver Dee can be seen gliding on their devious way through fertile meads and lovely vales, and bathing the foot of the antique fortified town of Chester, whose turrets and battlements must then have frowned defiance on the borders. This river was looked upon in old times as sacred, and thought to reveal the future by its tides, and the fitful changes of its channel, which occurred without apparent cause. On its banks lived the Druid priests, who explained its mysteries—though for their altars the antiquarian may now look in vain. Milton, whose boundless intimacy with all traditionary, as well as other, lore made him master of every secret, called the Dee a “wizard stream,” for well he knew the holy character it had long maintained.

The British name of Hawarden signified the Headland above the Lake, which name tells the tale of the former incursion of the sea on the marshes below.

We had lingered beside the pleasant river Dee at Chester, longer than most travellers would probably do, delighted with the singular town, and enjoying the walks round its walls, and it was almost with regret that we descended to

the quiet quay to take our passage in the ferry-boat—a ferry of twelve miles—to Flint. With a heterogeneous company of gentry and market-women we embarked, hearing on our way the Welsh language spoken for the first time. The river was bright and sparkling, rather rough, but so much the more animating, and when we reached the Queen's Ferry, the waves were high and white, and the wind fresh: the stream widened and began to assume a character of sea which was exhilarating and encouraging, and as we approached the dark red castle of Flint, planted on a rock, in the marshes, close to the shore, as if to deny entrance to the town, the aspect of things became very lively; for, the tide being low, a party of Welsh men and women were congregated with donkey-carts to convey the passengers and their baggage to shore, a process which was not accomplished without considerable hilarity. The extreme civility of the people became apparent from the first, and throughout our tour in Wales we never had occasion to change our opinion of their uniform good-nature, obliging character, simplicity, and honesty.

Flint Castle is a mere shell, showing only by the thickness of its walls of what immense strength it could once boast: the broad river bathes its base—through its towers the light gleams in loopholes more than were made for arrows, and one large grim fabric called the Double Tower is considerably larger than the rest. The rents of ruins yawn fearfully amidst the displaced stones, and, by sure degrees, time



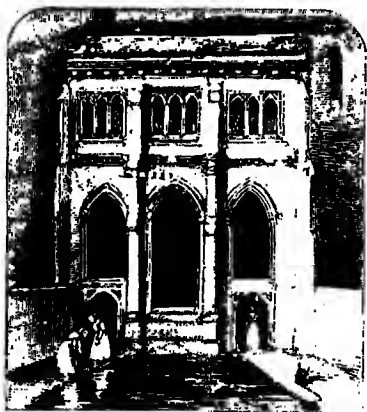
threatens at no very distant period to destroy the fortress where the unhappy Richard the Second arrived in an evil hour, under the escort of the perfidious Percy of Northumberland, who had betrayed him to Bolingbroke, at Rhuddlan, another castle in the marshes, which we afterwards saw. Like all the strongholds in Wales, after a long cessation of hostilities, Flint Castle in the wars of the Commonwealth, sent forth its dying groan with its last struggle, and remained a solitary wreck on a melancholy shore. It was built by Edward the First, in order to afford him the means of securing the country he had subdued, and while the fierce struggle was going on between him and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd which ended fatally for the weaker Prince of Snowdon.

Flint, the first borough and market town on the Welsh coast, does not impress the beholder with much admiration; it has rather the appearance of a poor English village; yet there is considerable trade carried on at Flint and Bagilt, in the smelting of the lead ore of the numerous mines in this district. Indeed, there is too great evidence of this in the very ugly drive from this place to Holywell, where we arrived, anxious to see the famous well of the miraculous St. Winefred, as famous in story as any in Europe.

Treffynnon, or the Town of the Well, as the expressive language of the country names this romantic place, has a more imposing appearance than its neighbour of Flint, though its pretensions to be called 'a flourishing town,' as

the guide books proclaim it, is scarcely apparent to a stranger. We stopped at a remarkably good inn, and lost no time in going down the steep hill at the bottom of which the pretty little chapel over the fine well is situated. Nothing can be more secluded and pleasing than its position by the side of the handsome church with its low churchyard, all placed in a deep hollow, so removed from the upper town, that the bells summoning to prayer cannot be heard above, and a ringer is accustomed to go about the town with the large bell slung round his shoulders, and a cushion on his knee, against which the bell beats as he walks, and proclaims his holy errand. This old custom, doubtless of considerable antiquity, is still kept up, and we were glad that, being there on a Sunday, we were able to see the perambulating belfry.

Margaret, the mother of Henry VII., erected the grace-



ful chapel whose fretted roof is the boast of Holywell, but one had existed long before her time; for the miracle of St. Winefred happened, according to the monks of Basingwerk, to whom the world is indebted for the legend, early in the seventh century, and is thus told:

Winefred, a beautiful and devout virgin, lived in the reign of an imaginary king,

and was of noble birth, and the niece of a man whose sanctity had already made him conspicuous, and who was known as the good Benno. A prince of the country, whose name was Caradoc, saw the fair damsel, and loved her; but his passion was not so pure as her goodness ought to have inspired. Even then there was a chapel at the foot of the hill, where, while Beuno was at the altar praying with certain of the inhabitants of the neighbouring town, amongst whom were the parents of Winefred, to the astonishment of all, a head rolled and bounded into the sacred enclosure, and stopped at the altar. Beuno stooped to raise up the head, and observed that where it had rested, instead of the pool of blood which was there but an instant before, a stream of crystal water had sprung up. His amazement was increased when he found that the beautiful features and long golden hair of the head he gazed upon were those of his beloved niece. He hastened from the spot, and mounting the hill, discovered her mutilated body lying prostrate, and the cruel prince Caradoc flying with a drawn sword in his hand. The truth became clear to him at once. Winefred had fled from the importunities of the prince who, pursuing, had wreaked his vengeance on her by cutting off her head. The saint, for such Beuno afterwards became, immediately with devout prayers joined the severed head to the body, when, to the awe and delight of all beholders, the virgin arose, as if from sleep, uninjured and lovely as ever, nor was there a trace left of the accident but a slight white mark, like a thread,

round her throat. Beuno cursed the caitif prince, “who melted away as wax melts before the fire.” Winefred dived fifteen years after this event; she founded a monastery at Gwytherin in Denbighshire, of which she became the abbess, and died there.

Before the event of her decapitation, it seems the valley was particularly dry, so much so as to bear the name of *Sychnant*,\* from that circumstance; therefore it was most fortunate that the head of the pursued damsel should have rolled where it did. Not only did the spring attest the miracle, but the very moss and stones around have properties that enforce the belief. The moss emits an odoriferous smell in testimony of the saint’s purity, and the stones at the bottom are stained with her blood, and keep their tint to this day. It is true that some naturalists, who had not the same motive for keeping the world in ignorance as the monks of Basingwerk had, have proclaimed that the moss is only a sweet-scented plant called *Jungermannia asplenoides*, and that the crimson stains on the stones are produced by a vegetable named *Byssus jolithus*, by no means uncommon, thus characterised by Linnaeus: “the Byssus easily betrays itself by giving the stones, to which it adheres, an appearance of being smeared with blood. If rubbed, the plant yields a smell like violets.”

Fortunately, all the botanical and other students, of the days of St. Winefred, were monks, who knew well how to

\* *Syeh*, i. e. *dry*, and *nant*, a *hollow*, a *brook*.

own counsel, and turn their knowledge to their own advantage.

The Abbey Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, at Shrewsbury, was honoured with the keeping of the bones of St. Winefred, which, in the reign of Stephen, were removed from Gwytherin, where they had hitherto rested:

The monks of Shrewsbury were very unhappy at having few or no sacred relics, such as brought wealth to other religious establishments; and, consequently, they cast about in their minds how they could repair this deficiency. It happened that a monk of their fraternity was seized with mental derangement; the brethren addressed prayers to Heaven for his recovery, and begged the assistance of neighbouring monasteries, among the rest that of Chester. In compliance with this request, the monks of Chester abbey made a procession in their church, and as they lay prostrate before the altar singing the seven psalms, one of them, Ralph the sub-prior, "a man of a very simple mind," fell asleep and saw in a vision a beautiful virgin who told him to go to the fountain of St. Winefreda and celebrate mass in her church, when the sick brother would be restored to health. The sub-prior, not liking to disclose his vision, kept the secret forty days; but the brother continuing ill, he at length got the better of his ill-timed timidity, and named what had happened to him in sleep. After this, mass was said at the fountain, and the monk recovered. It now occurred to the brothers of Shrewsbury, that the bones of this blessed Virgin would be a treasure

which, if they possessed, would render their abbey "famous over the world. A series of visions of "grave matrons," and "splendid youths with English countenances," continued to encourage the idea of applying at Gwytherin for the desired relics, which were "for a consideration" procured, in spite of the opposition of one "man of Belial," who tried, says the legend, to prevent their being moved: gold however, or another miracle, silenced him, and the negotiating monks repaired to the spot where St. Winefred's body was said to repose. The cemetery was held in great reverence, and never entered without previous prayer: "any animal," says the prior who relates these facts, "that grazes in it, immediately drops down dead; and about two years ago, a man endeavouring to cut off a small branch of the holy oak which grows there, that he might tie his shoes, (which after that country fashion were made of raw hide,) with some of the inner bark, had soon cause to repent of his boldness. His axe stuck so fast in the tree, that no one could move it, his arm became stiff and immoveably fastened to the handle; nor could he obtain relief from his misery, till his parents and friends by tears and prayers at the tomb of St. Winefred, released him."

No sooner were the monks of Shrewsbury possessed of the holy bones, than miracles began to be performed by them,—at every hostel, where they reposed the sick were cured; and on the road the lame and blind were restored merely by the virtue of her passing by. The elements combined to show

her honour, and the clouds big with rain which threatened to descend in a deluge, paused above the heads of those who formed the procession which bore the relics to St. Peter and St. Paul at Shrewsbury, and did not burst till all the ceremony was over.

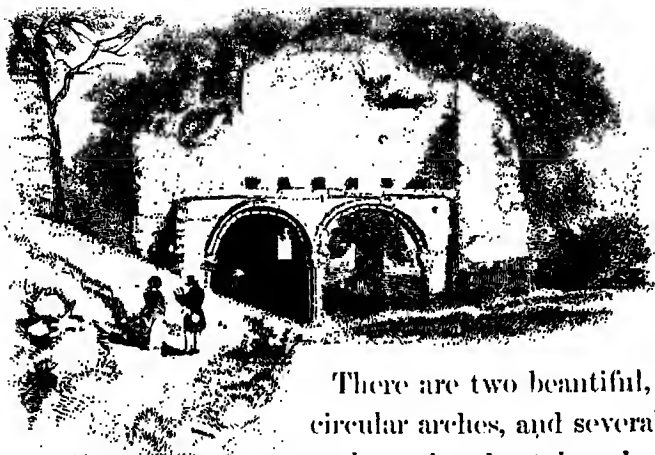
After all this, it is mortifying to find that the blessed St. Winefred never existed at all, nor was more than an Undine, a thought, a name, a fairy of a fountain ! for Gwenwrewy, as she is called in Welsh, signifies *the white hill water*, or the *white gushing stream*,\* meaning the overflowing well, which Nature formed without a miracle.

There is not, at Holywell, or near it, a trace of St. Winefred or St. Beuno, beyond the crystal well which bubbles and flows for ever ; and round which the Roman Catholic votaries still leave their crutches, deforming the beautiful roof into which they are stuck ; but we afterwards visited, at the extremity of Wales, the chapel of St. Beuno himself, whose fame at one time resounded far and wide through the country.

It is curious, in travelling, to trace from place to place the fate of particular persons : by keeping their histories in mind, the whole country one passes through presents but scene after scene of the drama of a life. Thus the two Edwards and the Llywelyns, Richard the Second, St. Beuno, and others, are all to be followed as we advance from vale to vale, from mountain to mountain, and from town to town in the Principality.

\* In Brittany, the fairy of a fountain is called *Gwen-korrig*, or *Korrigwen*.

In the church close to the chapel of St. Winefred is shown a headless trunk, as the effigy of the holy virgin of the well, but it is evidently that of a priest, and is supposed to be the abbot of Basingwerk, formerly a flourishing establishment near the sea, within a walk of the town. We wandered through fields and lanes, following the windings of a crystal rivulet, till the ruins of the abbey became apparent. They are very picturesque, and must once have been much finer; but everywhere in Wales, as in France, these objects of interest are destroyed by the greediness of the people, who remove the stones to build their houses.



There are two beautiful, simple, circular arches, and several of the early pointed style; but windows, pillars, and doorways, are fast falling to entire decay. The clear streamlet, which runs near, comes from St. Winefred's well, and turns several mills in the valley: no doubt the monks who composed her legend knew well the



advantages of her spring; and in this charming seclusion enjoyed themselves as much as such holy men generally did in those days, surrounded with every luxury and beauty of nature, and calling all their own within their ken.

A chapel of the order of Knights Templars was established at Basingwerk, and it was an extremely powerful abbey; nor were other miracles beside that of St. Winefred wanting to give it celebrity. There exist here certain sands which extend to a considerable distance, and which we had, from the hills above, contemplated for some time, unable clearly to trace their course; they are called "The Constable's Sands," for the following reason: Hugh Lupus, the redoubted Constable of Chester, had a son who, on his return from Normandy, inspired by pious fervour, resolved on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Winefred. The turbulent Welsh, attacked him on his way, and, after a short struggle, unable to contend against numbers, he fled and took refuge in Basingwerk Abbey. He knew that his father's men would soon come to his relief if his danger was known, but the wide river was between them, and the Welsh were watchful. The pious pilgrim cast himself at the foot of St. Werburgh's altar, the saint who presided over the welfare of Chester and to whom that cathedral was dedicated, and implored his assistance. Suddenly a great cloud obscured the air, which dispersing by degrees, discovered to the attentive monks that a huge bar of sand, firm and level, had been miraculously placed be-

tween Flintshire and the opposite coast of Wirral, and across it, as by a bridge, the horses and mail-clad warriors of the Constable of Chester were seen advancing with banners displayed, to the utter consternation of the Welsh marauders and the exultation of the devout young knight and his holy friends.

There once existed a castle near the abbey, but every vestige of it is now swept away, and it is sufficiently difficult to any but an antiquarian to trace the famous Watt's Dyke hard by, where the Danes and Britons held conference. The ancient name of the monastery was Maes Glâs meaning 'of the green meadow.'

The seats in this neighbourhood of most consequence are those of the families of Pennant and Mostyn; the former celebrated as being the abode of Mr. Thomas Pennant, the well-known tourist and historian of the country, the other for having given refuge for a time to Owen Tudor's grandson, Henry of Richmond. An opening is still shown called the "King's Window," through which the future monarch escaped when pursued by a party of Richard the Third's soldiers. Richard ap Howel, the host of the Duke, joined his forces at the battle of Bosworth, and was rewarded by the conquering Henry with the belt and sword he himself wore on that day.

The route from Holywell to St. Asaph has no striking features till the town is nearly reached, when a glimpse is seen, through an opening in the hills of the fertile and

surpassingly beautiful Vale of Clwyd, which yields to none in Wales for variety and luxuriance.

The cathedral town of St. Asaph is a mere village, of very little extent and quite insignificant, but it is agreeably situated on the banks of the Elwy and the Clwyd, over both which rivers are picturesque bridges. The cathedral has lost much of its ancient character, but is a charming little building, quite in miniature, with a pretty low, embattled square tower and handsome windows. Its close is like a small park, and the walks are kept as neat as in a gentleman's grounds. The Bishop's palace is near, and, at a distance, in the fields, has a good effect on the gable-end side; for, on the other, the building is modern and unattractive.

Groves of trees surround the little town, and its position is peculiarly good: the walks and drives round are rural and pleasant, and there is an air of comfort about it, as it lies smiling in the sun, for so we saw it, very satisfactory. Of several fine seats in the neighbourhood, that belonging to Sir John Hay Williams is the most magnificent and best kept up in the Principality; it is called Bôdelwyddan, i. e. 'the Abode of the Chieftain,' and stands on an eminence in a bold, commanding position, with an extensive view of the wide sea at Rhyf on one hand, and the sweep of the lovely vale of Clwyd on the other. Denbigh Castle, on its magnificent height, appears amongst the surrounding hills, and Rhuddlan Castle in its marsh, in the low grounds.

The park is very finely laid out, and groups of stately trees are placed with singular taste on the undulating lawns. The arbutus is here remarkably large, and ornamental trees of various kinds throw their graceful branches far and wide. The house is built of fine hard white stone, found in a neighbouring quarry; as it now stands it has the most genuine appearance of an antique castle of any modern construction I have met with; for the solidity and massiveness of the towers are little inferior to the style of building existing in times which at the present day we seek to imitate. On removing part of the building to remodel it, those of the old walls which were taken down were found to be of immense thickness, the spaces between two being filled up with stones, mortar, and cement, which, left to cool, became as solid as the rock itself. The whole form of the castle is in the most correct taste, without any attempt at too much, or overloading with ornament, a fault of very common occurrence, particularly with architects in this part of the country. The luxuriant growth of ivy, and every description of graceful climbing plant, intermixed with crimson and white roses, which spread in profusion over the battlements and hang the walls with glowing drapery, add greatly to their beauty and give them an air of cheerful antiquity. The windows are beautiful, of the early English style of architecture, and the view from all of them exquisite.

A fine herd of red deer adorns the park, and some of them are occasionally seen waving their large antlers and pacing

majestically beneath the spreading trees not far from the house. A party of milk-white goats also animate the scene, and we were much amused at a fairy colony of guinea pigs established beneath a magnificent arbutus, whose tiny forms might seem the spirits of the place, haunting the lawns, and coming stealthily forth in the twilight, timidly roaming about and startled at the least movement, then flitting back to their ornamental hutch for concealment. Hares scud along the velvet expanse, and squirrels and birds of all sorts make it their resort. It struck us on the whole as one of the gayest and most beautiful spots we had ever beheld.

The gardens are extensive and well laid out, and the hothouses unrivalled—a fine and almost unique specimen of the pink Chinese water lily was in bloom when we were there, and realized all one's dreams of the splendour of that extraordinary flower: red and blue water lilies flourish greatly in the houses, and all that adorns the celebrated conservatory at Chatsworth is to be found here in equal perfection on a less extensive scale.

Bodelwyddan was formerly possessed by an ancient family named Humphries, from whom it was purchased by the celebrated Sir William Williams, Speaker of the House of Commons in the last two short parliaments in Charles the Second's time. Sir William was appointed Solicitor-General in the following reign, and became a Welsh judge. At this period he had more talent than wealth, but his manners were winning, and his wit great. On one of his

circuits he was present at a ball where his partner was the daughter of a man of large property, Watkin Kyffyn, Esq. The brilliant young lawyer made himself so agreeable to the susceptible lady, that when, at the end of the dance, he declared that his heart was her own, and entreated her to take compassion on his devotion, she at once accepted and referred him to her father. Mr. Kyffyn replied to his eloquent appeal by a simple question, as to the young lover's fortune. The answer was very characteristic, and, as it appeared, sufficiently satisfactory. "I have a tongue and a gown." The gallant Sir William won his bride, and the possessions of the heiress founded the wealth of the family.

## CHAPTER II.

Denbigh Castle.—The Ascent.—Well of the Castle.—Welsh Language.—Airs.—Pennillion.—Cefn Rocks.—Y Ffynnon Fair.—Roman Station.—Abergele.—Great Orme's Head.—Snowdon.—Gwrŷch Castle.—Rhuddlan.—Edward I. and his Victims.—The Prince of Wales.—Morva Rhuddlan. Rhyl.—Seats and Scenery.—Roses.—Bôdryddan.—Mrs. Piozzi.—Brynbelli.—Richard Clough.—Bachegraig.—Legend.—Catherine of Beren, and her Husbands.—Tremerehion.—Davydd Dhu of Harradug.



NINE miles from St. Asaph is Denbigh, whose magnificent castle, we had admired from the windows of Bôdelwyddan, dominating the valley of Clwyd. In Welsh it is called Castell Caledfryn-Rhôs, the 'Castle on the Craggy Hill in Rhôs,' for so the territory where it stands was formerly denominated.

Well may Churchyard, the English poet of Elizabeth's time, who records the wonders of Wales, exclaim in raptures at the splendours of this castle, which, in his days, was not a mere mass of gigantic ruin, as it is now. He says the town and castle

" May compare  
With any one in Wales, where'er they are,"

and certainly the position of both is singularly picturesque

and imposing. The drive to it from St. Asaph is extremely agreeable, high hills of graceful form appearing all the way beyond the meadows, which border the bright little River Roe.

The town is on the side of a steep hill, which it is no inconsiderable effort for horses to mount. The intention of the friends whose guests we were, and who wished us to see every point of view in perfection, was, that we should stop beneath the castle hill, and there alighting, walk to the top; but, whether the London coachman really misunderstood the orders given, or that he had a contempt for Welsh difficulties, which he was resolved to prove could be easily surmounted by an experienced artist, before we were aware of his intent, he had hastily turned round a sharp angle with his four horses, and was rapidly ascending the limestone rock of Caledfryn on the summit of which the majestic ruin stands. It was too late for remonstrance, and in no inconsiderable agitation we beheld the precipice below, and the almost perpendicular and stony ascent before us, which no one had ever thought of daring till our *avatar* in a carriage with four spirited horses. We arrived, however, safely on the large area which stretches out in front of the main entrance, and the exultation of both coachman and steeds seemed equal at the feat accomplished. His acknowledged skill, however, was not accepted as a reason why we should brave the still greater danger of the descent of a hill, little inferior to that of Polignac, in Auvergne,



where our adventures were not unlike the present, and where the castle presents an aspect of considerable similarity, both as to its own features and those of the scenery which surrounds it.

Except the upper and lower entrances, this once powerful fortress is now a mass of scarcely distinguishable ruins, on which flourish moss and wild flowers, and plants interesting to the botanist, of which *class* was an accomplished lady of our party, who ran about in great delight gathering tiny treasures, destined to be transferred to the castle walls of Bodelwyddan. Nothing can exceed the splendour of the view from this fine height, justly called 'The Lantern of the Shire' by the poet, who exclaims,

"Denbigh my pen unto the clouds shall raise!"

and whose description is very correct,

"The rock descends beneath the auncient towne  
About the which a stately wall goes downe,  
With buildings great and posternes to the same,  
That goes through rocke ———"

The arch of the chief gateway is of immense height, and tolerably entire. Above it, in an ornamented niche, is a mutilated figure, said to be that of Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, by whom the castle was begun, but who suddenly desisted from his work in consequence of the tragical death of his only son, who fell into the deep well of the castle and was killed. This was in the time of Edward the First, who, leaving

conquered Wales and taken the lordship of Denbigh from Davydd, the turbulent but ill-starred brother of the last



Llywelyn, whom he so cruelly put to death, bestowed it on his friend Lacy, who enclosed the town with a wall, and but for the fatality which overtook him, would have extended his building much more. Lacy granted many privileges to the people, and his sway was a gentle and equitable one; it is singular that, even now, his memory is revered, while that of the next occupant is detested. The

first after him was Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, to whom the castle and town were given by Edward the Second; he was a tyrant and oppressed the people greatly, so that his fall was rejoiced at. But, in after times, a greater tyrant still came to rule the devoted land of Rhôs,—no other than Elizabeth's favourite, Leicester, who added greatly to the castle, and would have completed it, but that he became disgusted with the Welsh, who could not endure his insufferable oppression and tyranny, and who found means of representing their wrongs to the queen, who listened to them, and reproved the earl for his conduct.

The citadel walls extend for a mile and a quarter, enclosing the whole of the ancient town. Winding round the brow of the precipitous hill, appear the remains of walls and towers which show the castle to have been of immense strength and extent. But perhaps the most remarkable of all the remains is the grand lower entrance, whose enormous towers, of peculiar construction, seem to me to be the most ancient part of the buildings, probably of Roman origin, strengthened and restored by Prince Davydd, when he kept the town in spite of his brother, against whom he had revolted; for which crime, he was made, by that brother, a prisoner in the vale of Llanberris for twenty years!

No ruined castle I ever saw abroad struck me more than this of Denbigh; and one cannot but regret the entire state of dilapidation to which time, and Cromwell, have reduced so magnificent a structure, the boast of Denbighshire and, even in its present state, its ornament.

In the great area a grand Eisteddfod was kept in 1828, which is still talked of with pride by the townspeople. Before I came to Wales, I was inclined to think there was utility in endeavouring to keep up the music, poetry, and language of the Cymri; but, on the spot, I could not but change my opinion, and look upon the efforts made by the enthusiastic and romantic as unavailing, and little to be desired. The genuine love of music, the talent and the power, except in very rare instances perhaps, are passed away,—the poetry entirely so; and the language is a bar to improvement,

and a hindrance to the prosperity of the people, This I have constantly heard asserted by all lovers of their country, and the justice of the opinion is evident. Besides, in fact, the ancient poetical language of Wales no longer exists: the people, for their wants, have invented words, until they now speak a mere jargon, which a Welsh scholar could not understand. For the few romances and poems which remain, there is learning enough amongst Welsh antiquaries; and, as these are all carefully preserved in manuscript, there is no fear of their becoming unintelligible, particularly as numerous translations have been made of whatever is really valuable. As for the Welsh harp, it is now heard very seldom. If a harper appears, he plays fashionable waltzes and songs, but the tone of his own music is hushed. It is only the curious stranger who seeks for the native ditties; and, by the touch of genius, may be able to embellish their paucity of melody: for it must be confessed, that the few *good* airs of Wales have been carefully collected, and enjoy a certain popularity, while a host of others are known only to be passed over in silence as destitute of grace or taste.

Who is not acquainted with the “Gorhoffedd Gwŷr Harlech,” (March of the Men of Harlech,) “Merch Megan,” “Ar llyd y nôs,” “Codiad yr Hedydd,” (the Rising of the Lark,) “Serch Hudol y Gâdlys”—(Of a Noble Race was Shenkin), or the Allurements of Love, and it may be a few others besides, liked rather for their quaintness than their beauty. But who, in travelling through Wales, ever

hears one of these airs? As for poetry, until Wales produces such a poet as Ireland has the glory of possessing, who has made her really beautiful and pathetic tunes immortal by his verses, no sympathy can be conjured up by addresses to a drove of swine, such as

Hob y Deri dando,\* Away, my herd, to the green oak ;

or,

Ffarwel trwy'r pwll—Farewell thro' the puddle.

I cannot imagine that the Welsh care in earnest for their old songs, as other nations do, or they would occasionally sing them; they appear to me as little a musical nation as the French, and the voice of melody is hushed amongst them. I have been assured that a certain talent of improvisation still exists amongst the Welsh, similar to that found both in Brittany and the Basque country: but I had no opportunity of witnessing its display, for it is usually exhibited at festive meetings, and those generally are confined, I believe, to men. The guests will sing to the harp, or to a given tune without music, stanzas which are called *penillion*. One person improvises, or has prepared a verse suitable to the occasion of the meeting, which he sings; as soon as he has finished the strain is taken up by another, who tries to introduce something comic or satirical into the couplet; this is followed by the next poet, and when they

\* This tune is, however, cited as beautiful by Mr. Parry, who has done much for the national music.

get excited sometimes a great deal of ready wit and considerable humour is elicited: as long as there is any one to keep up the ball, the contest goes on, and has been known to prolong the gaiety all night. Like the Basques, the Welsh will sometimes contend parish against parish, and, it is even asserted, county against county; and for days and weeks the lovers of this lively war have been known to continue the exercise without tiring. The more mechanical of the guests are accustomed to store their memories with pennillion to be produced at need; but these, though amusing, are of course less valued than verses made on the instant.

Several Welsh persons I have known assure me that this talent exists still; but the few specimens I have seen of the verses are quite insignificant, and have no other merit than that of being extemporary.

We made many excursions while in the delightful neighbourhood of St. Asaph; amongst others, to the Cefn rocks, a range which rises from the banks of the River Elwy, and overhangs its exquisite valley, which presents as many and varied beauties, without savage ruggedness, as any in Wales. We had seen part of the pretty brawling river's course on our way to Denbigh, but on visiting the caverns had an opportunity of exploring its banks at our leisure. A more charming walk cannot be conceived than that from the grounds of Mr. Lloyd of Cefn, in search of the lately discovered opening which has produced so rich a harvest for his fields in the shape of bone dust. For, of the bones

of antediluvian animals is an enormous cave, on his estate, filled to overflowing: every grain in this retreat is formed of pulverized bone—we raked amongst the dust, and found several pieces of a polished appearance, and of the colour of ivory which has lost its brilliant white. One very perfect specimen of a young hippopotamus's tooth was shown us, which was found here, and doubtless more will be turned up. The dust itself is invaluable for agricultural purposes, and the discovery of the cave is equally so to geologists, several eminent members of whose society have eagerly hastened to the spot to observe its wonders. There is one cavern which has been long known, situated lower down the mountain, in which occasional traces of bones of animals have been found; but this is one entire receptacle of their dust, sufficient to amaze and delight the inquirer after the treasures of a past world.

From hence, after enjoying a long walk, climbing over rocks and through druidical looking fissures, and threading the mazes of entangled woods, we resumed our route, and descended to the calm green meadows of Y Ffynnon Fair—‘The Fairies,’ or ‘Our Lady’s Well.’ We found the ruins of a once beautiful little chapel which enclosed the crystal fountain, to which pilgrimages were once made. It grieved us to see the quiet spot disturbed by workpeople, who seemed bent on a purpose of cleaning and repairing, the object being to prepare this well for the use of the believers in hydro-pathy, a faith which threatens to attack all the fairy fountains

in the country. We trembled for the old carved moss-covered stones, which lay about in picturesque confusion, and did not dare to ask too many questions, lest our worst fears should be confirmed. The limpid water is certainly a great temptation, for it is as pure as that at Holywell, or at another, St. Mary's fount in the park of Bôdelwyddan, which yields to none in beauty of situation.

Through a succession of lively, cultivated, and delicious scenery, now meeting with a brawling torrent spanned by a beautiful bridge, now a wood, and now a secluded lane, we retraced our way, admiring the country at every step, and scarcely thinking it possible that it could be surpassed as we advanced further into Wales.

Pennant regrets having sought in vain for the remains of the Roman station of Vario, mentioned by Antonine, and placed at about twenty miles from Conovium. It would appear that since his time the discovery has been made in a wood belonging to Sir John Hay Williams, where a most perfect intrenchment exists; and the fact seems the more probable from a vessel full of silver coins of admirable preservation being found not far below this spot in a field. They are of Trajan, Faustina, Otho, and Hadrian, and are extremely fresh and beautiful in execution.

A Roman encampment is supposed to exist on a hill not far distant, overlooking Abergele, which was afterwards occupied by the famous Owen Gwynedd, the Welsh chieftain, who, like most of his countrymen, had to struggle with the



encroaching English for his rights. From this height the sea view is very grand, and here the Great Orme's Head, a dark mass of gigantic rock, first appeared to us; we afterwards made a much nearer acquaintance with it; and Snowdon with his three peaks was visible in the distance, while the enormous Penmaenmawr, the monarch of this region, came out in full majesty. The town of Abergelc lies in the flat country, and looks well from a height, and the dark red towers of Rhuddlan Castle, rising from the extensive Marsh, the scene of many battles, have a solemn and imposing effect.

The modern castle of Gwrych, placed on a rock towards the sea-shore, has a bizarre aspect amidst its trees and heights, and is not devoid of interest, seen far off; but its incongruity, on a near approach, destroys all admiration except for its position, and the magnificent sea view it commands: close by, above, is a fine cavern in the rock, called Cefn Ogo, which once afforded a retreat to a British army.



Rhuddlan is, like Flint, a mere shell, but appears much more entire; and its red towers, apparent from many points

of the road, have a solemn interest, continually renewed. The castle was of immense importance in the time of Edward the First's aggressions, and was the scene of many tragedies acted by tyranny and cruelty in return for treachery and revolt. Here Davydd, brother of the last Llywelyn, after that prince's fate was sealed, was dragged from Denbigh in chains, and, with his wife and children, subjected to every indignity, though the unfortunate victim was the possessor of a piece of the true cross, and the crown of King Arthur!

Merlin had prophesied that a Welsh prince should ride through London crowned; and Edward, willing that the prediction should at once be verified, caused the heads of both Llywelyn and his brother to be sent to the capital and paraded through the streets decorated, in derision, with diadems of ivy and of silver. The rhyme of Merlin, on which the Welsh built their futile hopes, runs thus :

“When English money becomes round,  
At London shall the Welsh prince be crown'd.”

This was explained by the reformation effected by Edward the First, respecting the clipping of the coin of the realm, which in the previous reign had been practised to a ruinous extent.

That Edward behaved with great cruelty and severity to his fallen foes cannot be doubted, nor can his conduct be defended, even when the barbarity of the times is considered; nevertheless, both Llywelyn and his brother Davydd had pro-

voked him by a continued series of deceptions, by breaking every treaty they had formed, by desertion, and by conspiracy on numberless occasions. "Welsh faith," in fact, had grown into a proverb for its worthlessness, and was esteemed by the English as the Romans regarded 'Punic Faith.'

The singular want of honour and truth displayed by the Welsh, both in their transactions with each other and with allies and opposers, is so striking, that it is difficult to read the details of these wars without indignation.

It was at Rhuddlan Castle that King Edward executed that famous *ruse*, which decided the fate of Wales. He had already put the Welsh barons and great men in a favourable humour by making the town a free borough, and passing a statute which tended greatly to soften the animosities between the two nations of Wales and England, when he assembled them and proclaimed his intention of listening to their repeated desire of having a native prince to govern them. He proceeded to say, that he had fixed on one whose life had been always most exemplary, one to whom crime or falsehood was unknown, who was born in, and had never left their country, and, moreover, who could not speak one word of English.

This announcement was received with acclamation, all their aspirations were at length to be accomplished; a golden age was dawning for Wales, and nothing would be left them to ask. Sadly were they disappointed, however, when the name of their new prince was made known to them, and

they found him no other than the infant son of Edward, born but a few months before at Caernarvon Castle, where the queen had been hurried, in order that her child might first see the light in the very heart of Wales.

There was, however, no appeal from this decision of the powerful King of England, and the ill-fated Edward of Caernarvon was hailed as their prince; and when, afterwards, by the death of his brother Alphonso, he became heir to the English throne, all the hopes of the Welsh of help from him were annihilated.

Between the village of Rhuddlan and the sea extends the celebrated marsh called Morva Rhuddlan, the scene of many a hard fought battle, but of which the most renowned is that between Offa of Mercia and Caradoc of North Wales, which ended in the slaughter of the latter and his brave Welshmen. Those who escaped the sword perished in the fatal marsh, from the influx of the tides, and it was left to a solitary bard,

“Who lived to weep and sing their fall,”

to teach his harp, on that sad occasion, the mournful lament, yet extant, called Morva Rhuddlan.

Rhuddlan is one of the oldest Welsh fortresses: it is thought to have been built early in the eleventh century. Its walls have witnessed sad mutilations,

“The strange fate  
That tumbles mightiest sovereigns.”

It was the last that King John kept in Wales, and the first taken by Edward the First. It was here that Richard the Second took his last repast previous to his betrayal into the hands of Bolingbroke: and here, after an ineffectual struggle for King Charles the First, General Mytton entered in triumph, in 1646. This was the period of its total ruin, in common with all the rest of the castles which Cromwell dismantled. •

The little sandy sea-bathing place of Rhyl terminates the Vale of Clwyd, and is a convenience to the neighbourhood, though it cannot boast of any greater attraction than a fine sea view and neat dwellings.

There are several interesting seats not far from St. Asaph, and the drives to most of them are very pretty: at the period of our stay in this part of the country, which was in July, there had not been rain for many weeks, and, though the farmers were complaining, we had no reason, as travellers, to regret the dryness, as the sunshine was peculiarly delightful, and the roses flourished, both in the gardens and hedges, with unusual luxuriance. • I never beheld anything more beautiful than the garlands of roses, pink, white, and rich crimson, which crowned every hedge-row in unceasing profusion,

“ As if a shower of fairy wreaths  
Had fallen upon them from the sky.”

The honeysuckle was occasionally allowed to peep forth

amongst its blushing companions, and the air was everywhere perfumed with their odour.

Bôdryddan is a pretty secluded mansion in the ancient Elizabethan style, considerably changed from its original state, but well renewed, and now filled with magnificent carved wood furniture from Copenhagen. In the drawing-room there is a looking-glass, which occupies nearly the whole of one side of the chamber, having a deep carved frame of peculiarly rich appearance, and a mantel-piece quite magnificent in its heaviness. This style suits an old English mansion in the country, perhaps, better than any other; the fondness for old furniture has now become almost a mania, and in some cases it must be approved; but that it should be adopted in a modern built London house, where nothing is in accordance with it, is indeed absurd; and the taste should be reformed altogether as quickly as possible. The idea, however, at Bôdryddan, of making two Egyptian mummies do duty as sentinels, in niches on the stairs, though certainly quite new, will, it is to be hoped, not be adopted either in town or country, as such grim guests seem but ill-placed in any situation but a nook in a museum.

There is a heronry here, and a pretty little chapel, built by Inigo Jones, who is said to have been the architect of the original house.

Brynbella is the half Welsh half Italian name of Mrs. Piozzi's seat, who there lived for many years with the agree-

able and accomplished companion for whose sake she offended and abandoned her severe admirer, Dr. Johnson. It is a beautiful Italian villa, kept up in excellent style by the present proprietor. The gardens are charming, and all about it lively and pleasing, with fine views and romantic rocks near the house, and nothing that in the least answers to the mysterious account given of it by old writers, although an ancient ghost, who was said to haunt the chambers, was transformed by some of the believers in tradition to the spirit of Mr. Piozzi, whose violin, which in his lifetime was so successful, was supposed still to awaken its tones in a certain chamber, during the silence of night. Even he has, however, been driven away by new furniture, new painting, and cheerful society; and it would be impossible to conjure up a ghost in such a scene.

When indeed it went by its old name of Bacheagraig, and lay half buried in gloomy woods, in 1567, it might have been possible to credit the assertion, that the house was built in one night by no less an architect than the Evil-one himself, whose condition on executing the work was, that he should keep a room in it exclusively for himself. The real history of it is as follows:

There was at Denbigh a poor boy named Richard Clough, or Glough, who by his industry, talents, and perseverance, rose from a humble condition to be one of the richest merchants of his time. He was first a chorister at the Cathedral at Chester, and afterwards became apprentice to Sir Thomas Gresham,

whom he served faithfully, and assisted greatly by his genius. In process of time he was raised to be his partner, and was soon able to contribute a thousand pounds towards the founding of the Royal Exchange. He travelled much, and being of singular piety, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, after which he took as his cognizance five crosses, which he bore henceforth on his shield. He was now Sir Richard Clough, and his wealth was enormous. Antwerp had been his chief place of residence, but he was desirous of building a mansion, and having an estate in his native county. He therefore built Bachegraig in the Flemish style of architecture, which he admired, and projected great improvements in the neighbourhood; amongst other projects he wished to make the Clwyd navigable from Ikhuddlan, and to have introduced commerce, as he traded largely with other countries. His house was almost in the style of an Eastern bazaar, for the convenience of the merchandise he intended to place in the courts. But his intents were crossed, how, does not altogether appear; his wealth was so great that it passed into a proverb—

Efe a aeth yn Glough,  
He is become a Clough,

was said of any man who had risen from poverty to affluence. He had two daughters, to one of whom he left the house at Bachegraig, and who married Roger Salusbury, of Lleweni, of which family Mrs. Piozzi was a descendant and an heiress, and thus it came to her. Another daughter married a



Wynnè, and to her he gave the Abbey of Maenan, now belonging to her descendant, Lord Newborough. Sir Richard had no legitimate son: he had indeed a favourite natural son, whom he sent for to reside with him at Antwerp, where his chief inclination seemed to be, and to him he left a house in Denbigh, called Plas Glough; but the bulk of his great property he bequeathed, according to an agreement between them, in case of survivorship, to his friend and patron, Sir Thomas Gresham, who did not live many years after him. To the family of Salusbury of Lleweni Hall, an ancient seat in the neighbourhood, attaches a curious tale connected with the merchant knight of Bachegraig, whose daughter married one of the race; and who himself was the husband of a lady who is celebrated in the country. I saw her portrait by Lucas de Heere, at Gwydir, and again at Erthig, probably by the same hand; though it is not remarkable for beauty, it is still curious and well executed.

She was called Catherine Tudor of Beren, and was heiress of Tudor ap Fychan, of Beren, an estate in this part of Wales; she married first Sir John Salusbury, called the Strong, of Lleweni, who died while she was still in her bloom. It was at his funeral that she was conducted to and from church by her friends and neighbours, Sir Richard Clough and Morris Wynne of Gwydir. With the usual promptitude of his character, the gallant merchant, as he led her along "with the tear in her ee," whispered his wish to make her his own;

and far from being offended at his boldness, she smiled at immediate consent.

The solemnity over, Morris Wynne stepped forward and presented his hand to the fair widow, when, full of hope and expectation conceiving it impossible that he was not first in the field, he ventured to make a tender declaration, and an offer of his heart and estates. With infinite politeness and gratitude, the gentle Catherine replied that he was too late, for she had given her promise to Sir Richard before she entered the church; but to console him, she gave him her word, that should the same sad event happen to her second husband, he should be her third.

On the death of Sir Richard, he claimed her plighted vow, and became her spouse; but he too died, and, for a fourth time, Catherine de Beren became a bride, marrying Edward Thelwall of Plas y Ward. She died in 1591, and has left a name of much note behind her. She appears to have preferred Sir Richard Clough to any of her husbands, and wears his hair in a locket round her neck, suspended to a gold chain in her picture at Gwydir.

Just above Brynbella, on a very high hill, from whence is a magnificent view of the whole Vale of Clwyd, stands the pretty church of Tremeirchion, surrounded on all sides by splendid scenery. Here we were allowed to hear the children of the school sing several hymns in Welsh, which they did extremely well, their soft voices sounding very musically as they stood in a row at one corner of the

churchyard, and we listened beneath the shade of the fine old yew trees to their melody. In the church are several curious tombs,—one of a crusader, considerably injured, but the figure on it known as the effigy of Robert Pounderling.

The most remarkable, however, is that of a certain Davydd Dhu of Haraddug, whose tomb, in a niche of the wall, is inscribed “Hic jacet David ap Roderic ap Madog.” He was, it seems, vicar of Tremeirchion, and a dignitary of St. Asaph. He had much taste in poetry, and was eminently learned; which circumstance, at the time he flourished, namely, in 1340, was enough to give him the character of a necromancer, which he consequently attained. He was looked upon as a prophet; and certain prophetic rhymes attributed to a later poet, were probably of his composition. These are called Daroganeu, or Prophecies, and are held in much esteem in North Wales.

Although he had been a great benefactor to his parish and neighbourhood, yet his love of learning had, it seems, betrayed him into more dealings with the author of ill than was altogether safe for his soul; and that artful spirit, always watchful to obtain those as his victims who have distinguished themselves on earth, had been known to boast that he would have his body whether he was buried *in or out* of the church.

Davydd Dhu, was too cunning, however, for his enemy, for he gave orders that his tomb should be made *in the thickness of the church walls*, thus altogether evading the deceiver, who, on

coming for his prey in great glee, after the interment, started back in consternation, exclaiming, as he fled discomfited—

Davydd Dhu 'r Haraddug  
Ffals yn fyw, a ffals yn farw !  
Black David of Haraddug  
False in life and false in death !

There was formerly in this church a cross, which performed miracles, and whose fame is recorded in an *awdl*, or poem of 1500 lines ; but no traces of it now remain.

### CHAPTER III.

Conway Bridge.—Conway Castle.—The Town.—The Bard's Rock.—Dyganwy.—The Place of Wailing.—The Waters.—Taliesin and Prince Elphin.—The King and the Bards.—Gyffyn.—Trefiew.—Llanrwst.—Falls.—Machno. Wenol.—Moel Siabod.—Dolwyddilan Castle.—Gwydir.—Llanrwst Church.—Llywelyn and Joanna.—Joanna and the Bard.—Pearls in Conway.



I had heard much of the boast of North Wales, and the peculiar pride of the vicinity, the fine old castle, and the new suspension bridge, of Conway, and on our arrival there, far from considering that too much had been said, I think no description, however enthusiastic, can do justice to one of the most romantic and interesting spots that exists perhaps in Europe.

Although the modern bridge, which carries the road across the river to the castle walls, looks, as it is of course, of a very different date from the antique structure, yet there is some-

thing so singular, so beautiful, and so aërial in a suspension bridge, that it can scarcely be thought out, of character with the Moorish-looking towers and turrets to which it leads, which are as light and graceful as itself, in spite of their immense strength and power. With all the legends of supernatural buildings with which Wales abounds, it would not be difficult for the imagination to conceive that the Genii threw these delicate chains over the wide space that divides the castle from the opposite rocks, and thus obtained a triumph over the giant who kept the fortress. Both near and at a distance it has a beautiful effect, and is even more graceful than the surprising work over the Menai Straits.

The castle, although on the shore of the broad river which is here, at high water, half a mile wide, stands on a lofty rock, which forms the strong foundation of the fabric, and defends the town, which must however have been well capable of defence in itself, to judge by the huge walls which surround it, and which are still entire, and the enormous towers placed from distance to distance along their whole extent. The shape of the town is fancifully said to resemble a Welsh harp, to the form of which it really has much affinity; and as there are no suburbs nor a single straggling house beyond the allotted precincts, it is plainly defined and has a peculiarly striking aspect, quite unlike that of any other town I ever saw.

In all lights and from all points the castle looks well; but the best view of it is perhaps from the opposite shore, where

all its towers, and battlements, and minaret turrets, come out in great relief, particularly with a sunset sky behind them, when they stand forth most gorgeously. With the river full of water, and the sun going down red and glowing, as we saw it, the first evening we arrived, nothing can be conceived more magnificent than the scene :

“ Seem'd all on fire that Castle proud,”

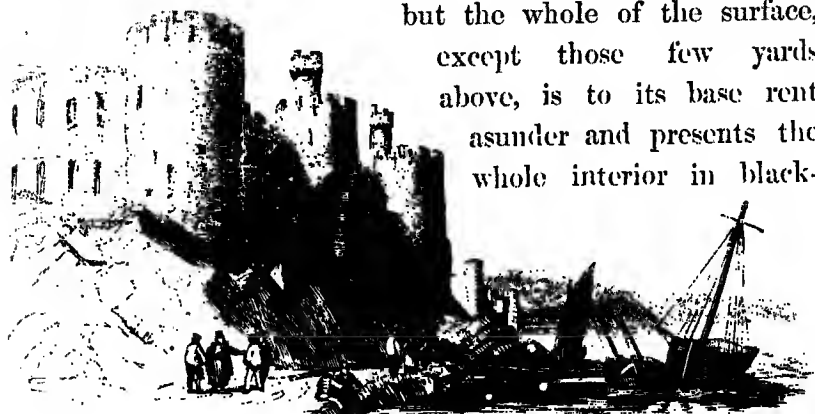
with crimson and golden flames issuing from the lofty, dark walls. But when we beheld it in the morning, shining white, with the blue sky for its background, we could not decide at which hour it was most admirable ; and again, whether by the light of a brilliant moon the mighty fortress, whose rents and defacements the favouring shade concealed, did not appear after all to the greatest advantage.

There are eight massive and enormous towers forty feet in diameter, four projecting on each side, and from the four next the river rise small turrets overlooking the country. All these, being battlemented and pierced, give an air of extreme lightness to the whole. The walls of the town extend for one mile and a quarter, and have twenty-one towers, all similarly ornamented.

Although a complete ruin, with not one chamber entire, exteriorly the castle looks almost perfect, except that on the side next the river one immense pile seems to totter, as if the next tempest must hurl it into the waves below ; yet it has stood thus for nearly a century, and so thick are the

walls, that it will probably remain in its present state for a still longer period. This defaced tower, is entire at top,

but the whole of the surface, except those few yards above, is to its base rent asunder and presents the whole interior in black-



ened exposure, showing the gigantic thickness of the walls, and the size of the chambers within. There was probably a breach made during one of the later sieges, which gave some opening; and it is said that, the inhabitants of the town having foolishly removed many of the huge stones for building, part of the tower fell, leaving it tottering over the rock in the perilous manner it at present appears. It is called Twr Dwn, or the Broken Tower.

The great hall, once lighted by nine fine windows, is of a singular curved form, and is one hundred and thirty feet long, and thirty-two wide: its roof was supported by fine massive arches, four of which, picturesquely overgrown with ivy, remain. In the Twr y Vrenines, or Queen's Tower, the roof of an oratory is still entire, which appears to have been







highly ornamented, and the small windows retain some part of their former beauty, though ages have passed away since the last vestige of painted glass, erroneously stated by a late female historian still to exist there, must have disappeared. This is thought to have been the chapel of Queen Eleonore, the wife of the founder, Edward I.: though some writers have represented it as the boudoir of the Queen and her ladies,—a conjecture little likely to be founded on truth.

It is very probable that a castle existed on this spot long before the time of the conquering Edward I.; but certain it is, that he re-erected the present building in 1283, and made it one of his strongholds against the attacks of the unfortunate Llywelyn, the last Welsh prince who struggled for independence and his rights.

Pennant says of Conway, “a more ragged town is scarcely to be seen within, or a more beautiful one without;” this is but





a curious old house with a stone window much ornamented, which is called *the College*, and may perhaps date as far back as Edward the First, who is said to have founded a college here, of which this is the only vestige.

The Plas Mawr, or Great Mansion, is remarkable both exteriorly and interiorly. The walls and ceilings of every



room, all now divided into separate dwelling-places for poor people, are carved with considerable care, with devices, coats of arms, initials, knots, and emblems. The arms of England, of Elizabeth's time, occur frequently

with the letters E. R. and R. D. as well as those of P. W.

Robert Wynne of Gwydir, the founder, and sheriff of Caernarvon in 1591. It is probable that the haughty favourite, Leicester, owned the house at one time, from his initials, coupled with those of the Queen, appearing so often. Mermaids, swans, owls, cranes, boars, ostriches, ragged staves, and other images, fill the compartments of both walls and ceilings, and the whole place is elaborately adorned, and must once have been of great importance.

We were so delighted with the extreme beauty of the castle, and the quiet of this simple place, that we remained there ten days, in order to enjoy frequent strolls amongst the ruins, and visit some of the most interesting places near.

There is nothing very remarkable in the church except the font, which is of very early date, and stands on a raised platform of two steps, which I found afterwards is not uncommon in Wales. Perhaps it existed in the time when Llywelyn ap Iorwerth founded a monastery here in the twelfth century, of which no remains are now to be traced. There is a very beautiful screen of carved wood, and one or two curious monumental stones on the rugged floor.

Gray's famous and beautiful ode, beginning—

“ On a rock whose lofty brow  
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
Robed in a sable garb of woe  
With haggard eyes the poet stood”—

has so impressed those of the inhabitants of Conway who have read it, that ingenuity has been greatly taxed to discover and fix on the exact spot whence the bard plunged from the

mountain's height into the roaring tide; and I was gravely assured by several enthusiastic and poetical persons, of the positive site of the event. To venture under these circumstances to doubt the crime of Edward, in putting to death all but this solitary bard, who escaped the general massacre to immolate himself, would have been heresy. Edward's character for this cruelty is as bad as ever at Conway, though antiquarians have cleared him from this one, of the many spots which stain his name. At the time when Edward built the castle of Conway, he destroyed that of Dyganwy,\* which stood on a hill opposite; a few ruins yet remain to show its site: it was of great importance, and the seat of Welsh royalty. Prince Elphin, the patron and friend of the bard Taliesin, was once confined by his uncle Maelgwn here, and it was owing to the sweetness of the poet's lays, that he was released.

This Maelgwn, though of course a tyrant after the fashion of those days, was a great admirer of the bard, and could not resist his appeal. It is recorded that a great pestilence ravaged the land hereabouts in this king's reign, and the appearance of the pest was prophesied by the British bards as that of a woman on whom Maelgwn would look and die of her basilisk glance.

"A strange creature," sang the bard, "will come from the marsh of Rhianedd to punish the crimes of Maelgwn Gwynedd; its hair, teeth, and eyes are yellow; and this will destroy him!"

This fearful prophecy was repeated to the terrified mo-

narch, who quitted his state, and fled over the hills to the church of Eglwys Rhôs, where he prostrated himself before the altar, and prayed for life—in vain—he was struck with the plague, and died, together with thousands of his subjects.

Diganwy has an imposing effect just on the opposite shore to Conway, and seems as if it kept sentry on the other side of the river. We passed beneath it on our return from a visit to the stormy shore, whence rises the enormous mountain called the Great Orme's Head, a landmark for miles along that coast. From the height of the mountain which we climbed, the sea view is wonderfully grand. We roamed over the rugged waste of hills, and gained the soft downs on which large flocks of snow-white sheep were grazing, not without much labour. Our path was pointed out to the ruined church of Llandudno, on the summit, by several pretty little Welsh girls who were going a long distance along the hills to fetch water from a spring. As usual, their manners and gestures were soft and obliging, and their features delicate and pleasing.

It seemed formerly the custom in Wales to build the parish church at least a mile from the town, for we found it almost invariably the case with the old churches; — whether it



was thought a pilgrimage enhanced the piety of the act of visiting the shrine of the saint, I know not, but it would

appear to have been so: the position of the now desolate ruin on the mountain of the Great Orme's Head, is sufficiently distant and difficult of attainment to secure some credit to the votary who seeks it.

This part of the coast answers in some degree to that on the shores of Brittany; but the traditions and poetical legends of the country have faded away here much more than along the answering rocks and wrecking headlands in France. There are still, however, records of a few tragical events; and a spot in the neighbourhood is called *Trwyn yr wylva*—"The Point of the Place of Wailing," from having been the scene of a frightful inundation which overwhelmed part of the beautiful vale of Conway. This event was prophesied for generations previously to its occurrence; and a threat had gone forth, that vengeance should overtake the family of *Helig ab Glanawg* for the crimes of his ancestors. Night after night, on the wild rocks and shores, amidst the hills and in the valleys, was heard the fearful cry of "*Dial a ddaw! dial a ddaw!*" but the wailer was invisible to all. At length it came, and suddenly, as mighty calamities, even though dreaded, generally do;—there was a great feast in the house of *Helig*, and the guests forgot in their jovial carousal, that fate was only pausing to overtake them. They called for more wine, and a servant was despatched into the cellar to procure some, while the old harper sat leaning on his harp, and the tears ran down upon the strings, for his spirit foresaw some coming evil. They reproached him for his silence, and he put forth his hand to awaken the chords, when a cry struck



moment the servant who had gone for wine rushed wildly into the hall, shrieking—"the tide! the tide!"

Those two alone had time to quit the house of Helig, and found safety in the mountains; all besides were swallowed—lands, flocks, and villages—by the impetuous torrent; and the fertile vale of Conway for miles was all one sheet of foaming waters, as it remains to this day. At a very low ebb, or with a strong south-west wind, waves may be distinctly seen breaking upon a causeway which runs into the sea at the Great Orme's Head; this is called the *Murian*, or *the walls*.

Morva Rhianedd, a great extent of territory known to have been overwhelmed by the sea, reached to a far distance below Abergele and the present shore of the North of Flintshire; near this is a part called The Marsh of the Monks, which possesses a very large wear, where great quantities of fish are taken.

It was after an inundation which occurred in the sixth century, that the illustrious bard Taliesin was found, like Moses, amongst the reeds, an infant; he was wrapped in a leathern covering, and placed in a small coracle which the fishermen found the first time they ventured out after the disaster of the land. The young prince Elphin, ~~to whose~~ whose care this part of the country had been confided by his father, had neglected his duties, and his example being imitated by his followers, the dams had not been properly attended to, and the waters had rushed in, overwhelming all before them. The prince was bitterly reproached, and his

sensitive mind was deeply wounded at the consequences of his neglect, so that he had fallen into a moody melancholy: when his fishermen returned, as they had often done before, since the flood, lamenting their ill success, and showing only the helpless child they had rescued from destruction, Elphin burst into tears and turned away, but afterwards taking compassion on the babe, he ordered it to be cherished, and caused it to be carefully educated. Taliesin at a very early age showed his superior genius, and became not only the greatest poet of the age, but the firmest friend and most effectual comforter to the prince who had saved him. He makes frequent allusion in his poems to the circumstance of his being found, and the following lines are a record of the event.

## TO ELPHIN IN SORROW.

Weep, fair Elphin, weep no more.	Elphin, wipe away thy tears,
Why is grief thy heart o'erflowing?	Sad regret is unavailing,
Let no man his lot deplore,	Though thy fate all dark appears
Good or evil all unknowing,	'Twill not mend by woe and wailing.
God his promise never breaks:	Doubt not thy Creator's power;
If the patient fishers stay,	I am small and weak, 'tis true,
Never in thy father's lakes	But my mind with wisdom's store
Will any fortune as, to-day.	And great gifts he may endue.

In the mountain and the sea,  
 In the river's inmost deep,  
 Succour to the good may be,  
 Tho' his hope awhile should sleep.

Elphin, thou with knowledge blest,	Elphin, brave and just and good,
Art to blame to yield to sorrow ;	Murmur not in solitude ;
Know that trust in God is best,	On my leathern couch I lie,
Leave foreboding for to-morrow ;	But my tongue has wisdom's lore,
Weak the infant in the wave,	Wisdom lightens in my eye,
Yet in danger strong to save,	Thou, through me, shalt weep no more.
More than tho' thy nets with pain	To the Blessed Three address thee,
Had three hundred salmon's ta'en.	And no harm shall e'er oppress thee !*

A somewhat uncourteous method of treating bards is recorded as occurring in this neighbourhood. The Monarch, who resided at Dyganwy, was accustomed to convene a meeting of poets and musicians at a certain period of the year, and to present prizes to those who excelled in melody. But he required on one celebrated occasion that they should all swim over the broad river Conway to his castle, there being then neither ferry nor suspension-bridge. It may be thought that King Caswallon had as little ear for music as he had consideration for the professors of *la gaie science*, by this arbitrary proceeding: the consequence was, that the harpers' instruments were spoilt by the water, and the poets carried the day.

Whether the enraged harpers invoked destruction on this ruthless king is not known, but his castle of Dyganwy was afterwards destroyed by lightning.

\* Elphin, deg taw ath wyllo  
 Na chabled neb yr eiddo  
 Ni wna les drwg o beithio, &c., &c.,

*Taliesin's Consolation.*

A very beautiful view of the fine castle of Conway is to be obtained in a walk to the secluded monastic looking village of Gyffin, the church of which lies deep in a glen. We were delighted with its calm, peaceful aspect, and the beautiful manner in which the service was read by the clergyman in Welsh, which we heard for the first time.

At Gyffin there are a few pretty old windows and one little Roman portal, quite a gem. In the church, which is in a sad state of dilapidation, is much that is curious: we observed a remarkable font of a remote date, and on each side of the altar, a very curious series of paintings in compartments, much defaced, but still exhibiting remains of gold and gorgeous colouring. With some difficulty the figures of the evangelists may be made out, with the symbols generally attached to them in early delineations of sacred story. On the vault above the altar are stars and symbols on what was once an azure ground, and, on the whole, the paintings are worthy of remark as illustrating early art.\* Caer Gyffin existed long before Conway rose from its rock to dominate the entrance of the vale. The length of wall and the fine towers of Conway castle and town present themselves in infinite grace and beauty both on the lower and upper road from Gyffin, and the shape of the Welsh harp is plainly perceived in its form.

\* Mrs. Jameson in her able paper on Sacred and Legendary art, No. 11. published in the "Athenæum," has minutely described the style of ornament of which the paintings in the Church of Gyffin are specimens.

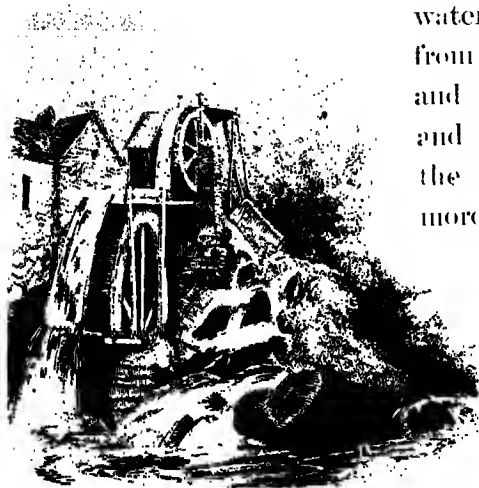
From Conway to Llanrwst the distance is twelve miles, and the drive very beautiful. At Caer Rhûn, on the way, antiquaries have placed the Roman Conovium and numerous remains are from time to time dug up on the grounds of a resident there. Lately a very magnificent shield has been found, which we by an accident missed seeing, much to our regret, as it is said to be extremely curious.

One of the prettiest villages I ever saw is Trefriw, as far as which the tide reaches. The two wheels of a charmingly picturesque mill are here turned by a rushing cataract, which dashes over heaps of rocks in delightful confusion, threatening to destroy the frail building close to which it leaps and

fumes. Just beyond it a fine waterfall comes rushing down from a great height, foaming and tumbling over dark blocks and through rich foliage, and the scenery grows more and more charming as the town

of Llanrwst is approached. From the immensely steep bridge built by Inigo Jones, the view on the river is lovely in the extreme: the clergy-

man's house and grounds, the magnificent trees and lawns



sloping to the river, the clearness of the water, and the mountains covered with every luxuriant growth that can be imagined—the grey rocks between and the bright blue sky and gay sun gilding the whole scene “with heavenly alchemy”—seen, as we were fortunate enough to see it—are enchanting beyond expression. The sky, which had been cloudy and uncertain when we set out, had cleared, and the sun breaking forth gave all the brilliancy which his touch alone can bestow, and rendered the view perfect.

We were peculiarly favoured during our stay at Llanrwst, for we had only fine weather, and were enabled to visit the waterfalls, and behold them in their most attractive forms.

The vale of Llanrwst has been called “the most charming spot in Wales,” and but for the *embarras des richesses* which the country exhibits, I should pronounce it to be really so: beauty succeeds beauty in continued succession, and every step has something new to show more lovely than the last.

There is a rivalry between the famous falls of the Wenol, or Swallow, and those of the Machno and the Conway. As each is exceedingly grand, and all possess features of their own, it is impossible to prefer one to the other; but perhaps, owing to their being the first I saw in Wales, I give the Falls at Llanrwst the preference over others which I afterwards visited. The extreme beauty and grandeur of the surrounding scenery greatly adds to their effect, as well as the shape of the rocks and the form of the rugged basins

into which they cast themselves with a roar, which awakens every echo far and near, and

“makes the woods acquainted”

with their vicinity.

The falls of the Conway have been aptly compared by a poet, who resides in their neighbourhood, to the rush and leap of a wild horse, whose mane streams to the wind as he hurls himself over the precipice. A rocky hollow, scooped by Nature into an immense caldron, receives the hurrying, startled wave into its bosom, where it boils and foams and lashes onward again down the shivering rocks into a hundred lesser falls. The river Machno joins the Conway at the distance of a few yards above that fall. Scarcely one hundred yards from the junction, and ascending the river Machno, is the very beautiful fall to which it gives its name. It is, I believe, sometimes called “the Pandy Fall,” from the circumstance of a fulling mill, in Welsh *pandy*, having been built close to it. From this fall the river Machno runs through a deep, narrow, rocky chasm to the Conway.

Rhaidr y Wenol, or the Swallow, comes angrily over a ledge of rocks in several gushing streams, throwing itself from point to point, and finally alighting in a deep cavern far below its first leap; then, with prodigious impetuosity, it hurries on for several miles to the romantic bridge of Pont y Pair, where by degrees it becomes calmer, but not



till after it has finished its strife of waters near that beautiful spot, where the Llugwy, violent and crested with foam, forms a hundred cataracts as it hurries through the luxuriant scenes of Betws y Coed, and at Pont y Pair dashes over a barrier of broken rocks, and thunders down the vale.

Moel Siabod here rises in awful majesty, a glorious mountain whose height is little inferior to that of the great Snowdon itself; at least so it appears when beheld from this lovely vantage: nor is it less imposing from Capel Cwrig. From its summit may be seen nine lakes and the distant sea.

Beneath this wondrous mountain, on an almost inaccessible rock, is placed an ancient feudal castle, or rather the







few scattered but picturesque ruins of one which was once of great importance in the country. At Dolwyddelan Castle Llywelyn the Great was born, and here his father resided. It now, in its romantic ruin, is a study for the painter and a theme for the poet, and of such scenes there is no lack in this region.

Whoever listens attentively as he stands on the huge rocks below the fall of the Wenol will be aware of a peculiar wailing sound, which he is not to attribute to the waters alone—they are the shrieks and howlings of a soul in pain, for the numerous acts of tyranny and oppression committed in his “day of life.” In fact, tradition records that Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, who died in 1626, and to whose memory is a brass in Gwydir chapel, Llanrwst, having sorely ground and harried his vassals during his life, is condemned to remain in spirit, for ever, beneath the great cataract, and there howl in vain.

Superstitious legends are, however, not very rife in Wales now, and it is only from the very ignorant or the half-witted that any supernatural stories can be gleaned. We heard of a strange wild boy who wanders about the woods and waterfalls of Llanrwst, and who tells of spots where fairies and spirits hide themselves by day, and issue forth at night, to scare the neighbourhood; but his dreams are heard only with pity by the country people.

As we passed along the road a place on a high hill was pointed out to us as a favourite haunt of an old man of

ninety, who regularly took his station there in fine weather, to observe the passers-by, and had done so for years; but I heard of no supernatural attributes attached to him, and he did not make his appearance when we passed.

A spot exists not far from the old mansion of Gwydir, by the side of the Lake of Geirionydd, where the Bard Taliesin is said to have lived and sung. The church there was built by Llywelyn the Great, for the convenience of his princess, who complained in moving verse of the fatigue she underwent in being forced, when near her confinement, to walk several miles up the mountains to a church, at a place called Llanrhyechwyn.

Gwydir, or Gwaed-dir, was so called, its name meaning 'the bloody earth,' from a dreadful battle having been fought here by Llywarch Hen, in 610. The original house was built in 1555, by John Wynne, ap Meredydd, grandfather of the celebrated historian of the Gwydir family: great part was taken down, and it was rebuilt in 1816, but so well, that it is impossible to regard it as otherwise than an antique place. The inscription in Welsh over the entrance is somewhat boastful, and not much to the purpose.

"A conspicuous edifice on Gwydir Hill, towering over the adjacent land; a well chosen situation, a *second paradise*, a fair bank, a place of royalty."

For though it is an agreeable position, the gardens and terraces pretty, and the house venerable-looking, although new in fact, it does not merit quite such exalted praise. The

picture of the grim old Sir John, whose howls we had so lately heard at the cataract, frowns from the dark walls, and that of the far-famed Catherine de Beren simpers there, newly framed. The house is full of carved oak furniture, and the panels and ceilings are all in conformity: it has somewhat a spectral, gloomy appearance, by no means answering to its announcement of a mansion in Paradise. The chapel in the wood above is much spoken of, but the evening had advanced too much for us to seek it, and we were anxious not to lose the sight of the Gwydir chapel in the church of Llanrwst, where the sarcophagus of Llywelyn is placed. We therefore left 'the Rock of the Falcon,' and descended again to the town.

The present church of Llanrwst, built in the fifteenth century, on the site of one much older, dedicated to St. Grwst, is very near the river, and contains much that is curious. The screen was brought from the suppressed abbey of Maenan, and is singularly delicate and elaborate in its carving. The chapel erected by one of the Gwydys for his family in 1633, is very elegant, and on the floor in the centre lies the empty stone coffin of Llywelyn the Great, which has been removed first from the abbey which he founded at Conway, and then from Maenan. It is very large, and is sculptured with quatrefoil ornaments, somewhat rudely: it is of great solidity and strength, and quite entire, but this is all that remains of the great Welsh prince, whose name is so often repeated in history, and who died in 1240.

Llywelyn had been induced by the artful promises of the smooth traitor King John to accept the hand of his daughter, the Princess Joan, but his having thus allied himself did not prevent the aggressions of his father-in-law, and John having cruelly murdered twenty-eight hostages, sons of the highest Welsh nobility, Llywelyn's indignation overcame all other considerations, and he attacked John in all his castles between the Dee and Conway, and, for that time, freed North Wales from the English yoke.

There are many stories told of the princess Joan, or Joanna, somewhat contradictory, but generally received; she was, of course, not popular with the Welsh, and the court bard, in singing the praise of the prince, even goes so far as to speak of a female favourite of Llywelyn's, instead of naming his wife: perhaps he wrote his ode at the time when she was in disgrace, in consequence of misconduct attributed to her. It is related that Llywelyn, at the battle of Montgomery, took prisoner William de Breos, one of the knights of the English court, and while he remained his captive treated him well, and rather as a friend than enemy. This kindness was repaid by De Breos with treachery, for he ventured to form an attachment to the Princess Joan, perhaps to renew one already begun before her marriage with the Welsh prince. He was liberated and returned to his own country; but scarcely was he gone than evil whispers were breathed into the ear of Llywelyn, and vengeance entirely possessed his mind: he however dissembled his feel-

ings, and, still feigning the same friendship, he invited De Breos to come to his palace at Aber as a guest. The lover of the Princess Joan readily accepted the invitation, hoping once more to behold his mistress; but he knew not the fate which hung over him, or he would not have entered the portal of the man he had injured so gaily as he did.

The next morning the Princess Joan walked forth early, in a musing mood: she was young, beautiful, she had been admired and caressed in her father's court, was there the theme of minstrels and the lady of many a tournament—to what avail? her hand without her heart had been bestowed on a brave but uneducated prince, whom she could regard as little less than savage, who had no ideas in common with hers, to whom all the refinements of the Norman court were unknown, and whose uncouth people, and warlike habits, and rugged pomp, were all distasteful to her. Perhaps she sighed as she thought of the days when the handsome young De Breos broke a lance in her honour, and she rejoiced, yet regretted, that the dangerous knight, the admired and gallant William, was again beneath her husband's roof. In this state of mind she was met by the Bard, an artful retainer of Llywelyn, who hated all of English blood, and whose lays were never awakened but in honour of his chief, but who contrived to deceive her into a belief that he both pitied and was attached to her. Observing her pensive air, and guessing at its cause, he entered into conversation

with her, and having ‘beguiled her of her tears’ by his melody, he at length ventured on these dangerous words :

“Diceyn, doccyn, gwraig Llywelyn,  
Beth a roit ti am weled Gwilym?”

“Tell me, wife of Llywelyn, what would you give for a sight of your William?”

The princess, thrown off her guard, and confiding in the harper’s faith, imprudently exclaimed :

“Cymru, Lloegr a Llywelyn,  
Y rown i gyd am weled Gwilym !”

“Wales, and England, and Llywelyn—all would I give to behold my William !”

The harper smiled bitterly, and, taking her arm, pointed slowly with his finger in the direction of a neighbouring hill, where, at a place called Wern Grogedig, grew a lofty tree, from the branches of which a form was hanging, which she too well recognised as that of the unfortunate William de Breos.

In a dismal cave beneath that spot was buried “the young, the beautiful, the brave;” and the princess Joan dared not shed a tear to his memory. Tradition points out the place, which is called, Cae Gwilym Dhu.

Notwithstanding this tragical episode, the princess and her husband managed to live well together afterwards; whether she convinced him of his error, and he repented his hasty



vengeance, or whether he thought it better policy to appear satisfied; at all events, Joan frequently interfered between her husband and father to prevent bloodshed, and sometimes succeeded. On one occasion she did so with some effect, at a time when the Welsh prince was encamped on a mountain above Ogwen lake, called Carnedd Llywelyn from that circumstance; when he saw from the heights his country in ruins, and Bangor in flames. Davydd, the son of the princess, was Llywelyn's favourite son. Joan died in 1237, and was buried in a monastery of Dominican Friars at Llanfaes, near Beaumaris; Llywelyn erected over her a splendid monument, which existed till Henry the Eighth gave the monastery to one of his courtiers to pillage, and the chapel became a barn. The coffin, which was all that remained of the tomb, like that of Llywelyn himself, was thrown into a little brook, and for two hundred and fifty years was used as a watering trough for cattle. It is now preserved at Baron Hill, near Beaumaris.

In Llanrwst church, beside the coffin of Llywelyn lies an effigy of his brother Davydd, grandson of Howel Coetmor, to whom the estate of Gwydir once belonged. There are several beautifully engraved brasses on the wall, and a curious old chest, fastened with two locks in a very ingenious manner, for the reception of charitable contributions.

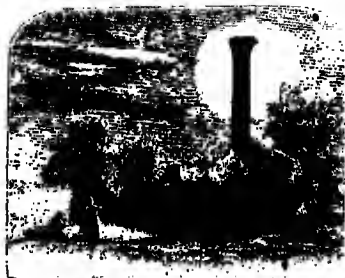
Many of the pearls for which the Conway was once famous, were found in the river nearly as high as Llanrwst. I had heard a great deal of them, and at length was shown some by

a lady who has quite a store of these treasures, some of a tolerably good colour and large size, but none approaching to the hue of oriental pearls. They are found in the shell of a large mussel. The curious have them set in rings and broaches, as they do the fine crystals found on Snowdon, which are called Snowdon diamonds, and are very brilliant and beautiful.

## CHAPTER IV.

Shores of the Conway.—Abbey of Maenan.—Carnedd Llywelyn.—Cefn yr Ogo.—The Heir and the Chimney.—The Sisters.—The Stranger.—The Priest.—The Skeleton.—The Cavern.—Pen Maen Mawr.—Puffin Island.—The Menai Straits.—Bangor Bridge.—Plâs Newydd.—Wonders of the Menai.—The Young Dancer.—The British Matron.—The Hundred Welsh Gentlemen.—Penrhyn Castle.—Slate Quarries.—Pyramid.

### ABBEY OF MAENAN.



OUR route from Llanrwst on our way back to Conway was on the opposite side of the river to that by which we had arrived, as we were anxious to see the country from that point, and to take the Abbey of Maenan in our way. All that remains of that once important establishment is now a solitary arch, to be found by help of a candle in the cellars of a pretty, neglected house which stands in a large garden, and is the property of Lord Newborough, who, having several other seats in Wales, does not keep this up in its former style, though it deserves some attention from the beauty of its position. The drive is charming all along the raised road

above the river, and the castle of Conway is a magnificent object wherever it appears

“ Rising with its tiara of proud towers  
At airy distance.”

Behold Conway and its harp-shaped walls as one will, from any point, or by any light, it has certainly the most imposing aspect of any place in North Wales.

The fine mountain of Carnedd Llywelyn was conspicuous as we drove along the beautiful road, which became steeper and steeper as we proceeded, till on a sudden, the clouds clearing away, the summit of the awful mount of Eryri, or Snowdon, the great monarch of the heights of Wales, appeared above all others. We were on our way to visit a friend in the neighbourhood, who has a house in a fine position, above the road to Abergele, commanding a magnificent sea view. We enjoyed several charming drives along and above the shore, and looked again on the strange rocks of Cefn yr Ogo, where tradition says a witch sits at the furthest extremity anxiously watching the heap of gold which she has made her throne: no one has ever yet arrived at this extremity, which, as the cave reaches all the way to Chester, according to received report, will require some resolution to find. The mine of limestone is said to be inexhaustible, and has probably been worked for ages, for here the harassed Britons sought shelter amongst the wild and dangerous recesses from their pursuing enemies under Hugh Lupus, the great com-

mander of Chester; and here, it is said, a great number of them perished. The huge vaulted entrance yawns high above the foot of the rock, like a cathedral doorway, and the eccentric turrets of Gwrŷch Castle dot the face of the cliff below as if they were the playthings of the giant of the cavern's children.

One of our walks led us to the hill on which stand the ruins of a manor-house, to which a singular tradition is attached. There rises, in the midst of mouldering walls, a remarkably high chimney, which is sufficiently un-picturesque, but which is regarded with some awe in the neighbourhood, for its fall involves the safety of the heir of the property, who will be destroyed at the same time that it ceases to tower upon that height. The house was formerly the abode of Ednifydd Fychan, a celebrated general of the great Llywelyn's. A few ivy-covered windows yet remain, through which the wide sea, dotted with vessels, and the castellated church of Llandrillo are seen.

From this Fychan descend the Vaughans and Pughs of Penrhyn Creiddyn, families of note in Wales. There is a story told of some former inhabitants of Penrhyn singularly confirmed by accident not many years since. Two sisters and a brother possessed the house and estate but they did not live in harmony, and the brother resolved therefore to change the scene and travel abroad; before he set out, as he imagined he might be absent some years, and felt that he could not altogether trust his sisters to recognise his

identity if time should have wrought much change in his then youthful appearance, he resolved to take some precautions which should prove his knowledge of the premises. His expedient was simple enough, for it was to place a needle between one of the joists of the ceiling in a small kitchen, and to drive the tooth of a harrow into a pear tree in the orchard. He departed, and year after year passed away, yet he never returned: his sisters remained in possession, and, having little affection for him, were quite content that he should leave them undisturbed. At length, when they had long ceased to think about their brother, they were surprised one day by the arrival of a "wretched ragged man," who seemed entirely destitute, was worn and wearied, and to their consternation proclaimed himself the master of the mansion. They heard his tale with indignation, and insisted on his being an impostor; he, however, called several persons to witness what he could disclose, and pointed out the place where the needle was rusted in the wood, and the bark of the pear tree had grown over the harrow tooth. His asseverations were nevertheless vain, and the cruel sisters ordered him to be ignominiously chastised and driven from the place. He retired to the cottage of a peasant near, who had no difficulty in recognising his young master, in spite of his altered appearance, and there he remained for a time endeavouring to persuade his unnatural relations to do him justice. One day he left the cottage, and his return was looked for in vain, nor was he ever seen from that moment. The sisters retained

possession, but nothing went well with them afterwards; the blood of their brother cried from the ground, and it refused to yield its crops: the lightning descended and destroyed their stacks, the fruit trees withered, and the flowers perished. They were hated and avoided, and no one witnessed their death. The family became extinct, and the estates were sold. The farmer who became possessor, many years after, having occasion to build a lime kiln, discovered in a fissure of the rock just behind the house, which had been carefully filled with earth, a perfect skeleton, which was no doubt that of the unfortunate brother of the two murderers.

Another legend of Penrlyn Place is of later date. The family of Pugh, who then possessed it, were Roman Catholics; in their establishment was a priest, named William Guy, who was a gloomy and bigoted man; and, preyed upon by his religious enthusiasm, he entered into a plan with others to exterminate all the Protestants in the parish of Creiddyn, which includes all the district to the east of Conway between the river and the sea. He carried on his machinations as secretly as possible, and it was agreed that a large body of men should meet at Penrlyn in the dead of night, and, headed by the priest, should sally forth and commence their work of slaughter on their unsuspecting neighbours. A man servant belonging to the family at Gloddaitli, not far distant, was attached to a young girl in the service of Penrlyn, and came secretly to visit her while preparations were going on

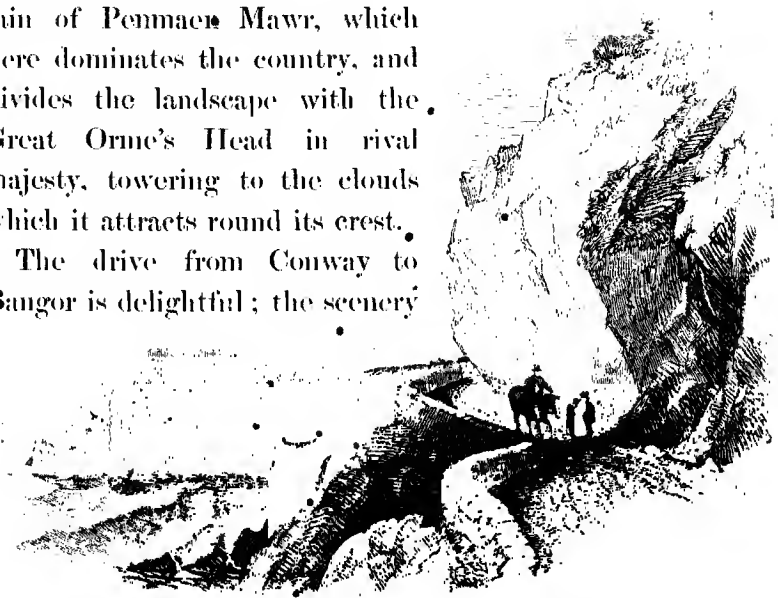
for the reception of the band of assassins who had been gained by the priest. A quantity of provisions was laid in, and much bustle had been observed by him in the house. The lover easily persuaded the young girl to tell him her suspicions; and finding that some extensive plot was on foot, he hastened home and informed his masters of the fact. An application was immediately made to the military in the vicinity, a troop of horse procured, and Penrhyn Place was invested. The conspirators had, however, become alarmed, and none of them were discovered. Guy himself was missing, and could not be traced; for he had chosen for his hiding-place a dismal cavern, ninety feet below the summit of the steep rock called Rhwleden. Here he remained concealed for some time, till one day, as the searchers were hovering on the coast in a boat, they observed a light smoke issuing from the cave. With great difficulty, for it was nearly inaccessible, they gained the spot, and there they found the priest in his lair. He was executed in a field below the rock, for his guilt was clearly proved; and the arms intended to be used for the massacre were discovered in a cave which communicated with the house. Some years after this, the family deserted the unlucky mansion, and on examining the few articles left behind, the neighbours found an old chest, which, on being opened, disclosed a withered hand, supposed to have belonged to the priest Guy.

We left Conway and all the attractions of its neighbourhood very reluctantly, and prepared to journey beneath the



huge shadow of the gigantic mountain of Penmaen Mawr, which here dominates the country, and divides the landscape with the Great Orme's Head in rival majesty, towering to the clouds which it attracts round its crest.

The drive from Conway to Bangor is delightful ; the scenery



imposing, and the sea view uninterrupted — the huge promontory of the Great Orme's Head juts far amongst the waves, and one frowning mountain after another places its giant foot along the shore. Penmaen Mawr and its smaller brother, Penmaen Bach, are passed ; the beautiful Carradd Llywelyn, and Carnedd Davydd rise beyond, and the pretty little village of Aber is approached where the great Welsh princes had formerly a palace, and near which is a fine waterfall, which we did not visit, as, owing to a long drought, there was little or no water in the usually overflowing chasm.

The broad waters of the Menai now burst on our view, with the distant town of Beaumaris, so called by Edward I., meaning—the beautiful marsh. Rising from the sea like a huge vessel, the blue island of Priestholm seems to keep the key of the Straits; and Bangor lies between ledges of slate-rock nearly concealed from sight. At the Penrhyn Arms, an inn formerly of great celebrity, we stopped, and from the gardens there the whole prospect is spread out in all its splendour. It requires that the tide should be full, in order that the real merits of the scene may be appreciated; and we were unfortunate in arriving at low water, and in generally, during our stay at Bangor, missing the most favourable moment to behold the frequently obscured attractions of the place, for the immense tract of mud left by the retreating waters strangely transforms the scene which at other times is extremely grand.

Bangor itself is a mean, dingy, uninteresting town; and its small low cathedral is without beauty. There is no inducement to pause in the streets, for not an antique house or a picturesque site is to be found. Nothing remains of the ancient castle built by Hugh Lupus in the time of Henry II.; and all the legends and antiquities of Bangor seem swept away to give place to the march of modern improvement, of which the stupendous bridge over the Menai is so grand a specimen, that even the lover of old traditions must be content to admire without regret.

Many persons compare the effect produced by the suspen-

sion bridge at Conway with that over the Menai Straits; but all that can reasonably be said in naming them together, is, that *both* are beautiful and majestic, as are Carnedd Llywelyn and Penmaen Mawr. The difficulties to overcome, no doubt, were great in both; but those of the Menai were probably the most stupendous. Both adorn in a most striking manner the scenes in which they are placed, and fill the mind with wonder and admiration at the triumphs of human ingenuity and skill.



The fine proportions of the bridge at the Menai deceive the eye at first; and its extraordinary dimensions are not so apparent as they afterwards become when the surprised traveller finds himself moving above the expanse of water on a fine double road, surrounded with enormous chains, amidst a grove of iron rods and pillars, and with the rocky and dangerous sea beneath him at a depth that it makes him dizzy to

contemplate; while the far off shore of Anglesea, is inviting him to enter the sacred precincts of her Druid temples.

Mona, the stronghold of the antique worshippers of pillars placed beneath every green tree, can now boast of but few of her Pagan shrines. One by one the huge Carneddes and Meini-Gwyr have disappeared, and perhaps have been found useful in the construction of the beautiful bridge which now makes it easy to explore the secret retreats once protected by forests, long since replaced by tracts of corn land. Whenever any great work is going on, the Druid stones once so sacred, are not forgotten; and their stupendous forms are sought and brought forth, and sacrificed at the altar of public utility.

We found, however, the fine cromlech, which is so singular an ornament to the charming park of Plâs Newydd, undisturbed and still reigning in great majesty on its own ground: a celebrated Carnedde, of whose destiny we inquired, and which is named by Rowland with so much respect, as existing but a short distance from the house, has, however, been levelled, and the very memory of it is forgotten by persons on the spot.



Plâs Newydd is a most cheerful, agreeable place, and one can only wonder at the entire neglect into which

it has fallen for more than twenty years. There is everything to make it desirable and pleasant—a fine sea, beautiful

grounds, and a country house built in the very best style, light, airy, convenient, and cheerful. Now that the rapid communication with London is to be rendered even swifter by a new line of railway from Chester to Bangor, there is no reason that Plâs Newydd should be considered too distant on its Druid island; and, as it has lately changed masters, perhaps it may resume the gay aspect which, even now, it has not altogether lost. It would be difficult to find a pleasanter spot, or one more accessible and delightful; to the lovers of sailing in particular, it must be a treasure, and, to those who admire fine views and lively scenes, it is not less so.

The sea of the Menai is said occasionally to produce very singular fish. That called the Beaumaris shark sometimes appears, a curious species of mussel, and creatures of the deep of forms that astonish the fisherman. This may perhaps account for the legend handed down by those extraordinary specimens of Welsh literature, "the Triads of the Isle of Britain," in which a variety of wonders are recorded, amongst them, that of the animal named "the Palug-Cat of the Menai," which is said to have ravaged the Isle of Man. This monster cat was brought to the Straits by an equally monstrous sow—probably a vessel, and by her cast into the sea, where the sons of Palug, the lord of the coast, happening to be disporting themselves, in an evil hour rescued the cat from the waves, and cherished it in their own hearth. As it grew, it became very fierce, and in the end caused the destruction of the family of Palug, and the whole country fell into its power.

This wild tale is imagined to bear some allusion to the power of the Druids, to whose priests Anglesea was subject for many ages.

There is a somewhat comic story related of the family of Owen Tudor, the husband of Henry the Fifth's widow, Catherine of France, whose mother, it seems, resided in Anglesea. Although of high blood, their fortunes do not appear to have allowed the family to live according to English ideas of rank. Catherine had announced her intention of marrying the young Welshman, who first gained her good graces by a combination of agility and awkwardness; for, in dancing before her, not being able to recover himself, in a turn, he fell into her lap as she sat on a little stool with many of her ladies about her. The match she proposed to herself was considered beneath her dignity, owing to the supposed obscurity of Owen Tudor's birth. A deputation of English lords was therefore sent to Anglesea to report the style of his mother's living. They found themselves in as great perplexity as Sancho in reporting his interview with Dulcinea, for the matron was discovered sitting in a field surrounded by her goats and eating a dried herring on her knees, having no other table.

The lords did not dare to relate the case exactly as they found it, for the fair Catherine had already made her election, and they saw the ill policy of too strictly adhering to truth: their account, therefore, ran as follows:—

They said “the lady was seated in state, surrounded by her

javelin men, in a spacious palace, eating her repast from a table whose value was so great, that she would not take hundreds of pounds for it."

The queen became the wife of this illustrious lady's son; but still reports of the meanness and vileness of his relations were brought to her ear, and she urged him to send for some of those chiefs of whom he boasted, that she might judge for herself of their dignity and importance. Owen, confident in the superiority of his lineage, sent for two of his cousins from Anglesea, Ivan ap Meredudd and Hywel ap Llywelyn, who accordingly arrived in all their savage pomp, and were presented to his bride. Catherine, surprised at their manly beauty, strength, and goodly nature, spoke to them with great affability; but after trying them in several languages, discovered that all but the native British was unknown to them, on which she laughed and exclaimed, "that they were the goodliest dumb creatures she had ever beheld."

These cousins, however, were brave and generous chiefs, although little fitted for a refined English court and the society of an accomplished French princess. It is related of Ivan ap Meredith, or Meredudd, that when Owen Tudor was in prison at Wyg Castle, Ivan went, with a hundred gentlemen of North Wales to visit him. On his return, being beset by enemies, favourers of the house of York, they found themselves in imminent danger. Ivan then harangued them, and entreated that they would bear in mind that the honour of their ancestors depended on their resolution in this time

of peril, concluding by this remark, "Let it never be said, in after times, that in this place a hundred Welsh gentlemen were attacked and fled, but that here a hundred Welsh



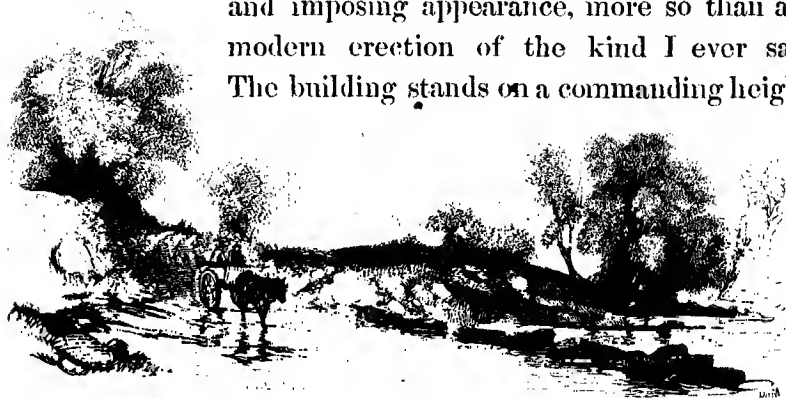
gentlemen were slain." This scene is said to have taken place at the spot now remarkable for a pretty mill, one of those so peculiarly attractive and so frequently met with.

Hywel ap Llywelyn had only one son, but he had brought him with him, and the same was the case with two others; Ivan therefore generously placed these young men out of the fury of the fight, while he himself and all his own sons advanced first. At the first onset he was sorely wounded in the face, and in consequence was called 'Sqwier y Graith,' or 'Squire with the scar,' to his dying day. "But," says the



Chronieler, "God gave his enemies the overthrow, he opening the passage with his sword."

From Bangor the lofty towers and turrets of Penrhyn Castle are conspicuous in the scenery, and have a very grand and imposing appearance, more so than any modern erection of the kind I ever saw. The building stands on a commanding height,



and from its elevation has a magnificent view of Beaumaris Bay, and all the wide sweep of the sea, Puffin or Pristholm Island, and great part of Anglesea, the fine bold rock of the Great Orme's Head, said to have once been dedicated to Serpent worship, and the range of the Caernarvonshire mountains.

So stately, so massive, and so stupendous is this castle, that it scarcely seems the work of a modern architect; and if there had been more simplicity observed in its construction, it might well pass for a genuine Roman castle. The enormous profusion of ornament with which the doors, windows, staircases, halls, and ceilings are covered, betray the effort

made to render that complete which would have been more so with less pains. The involved pillars, the redundant zig-zags, the countless grotesque heads, of all sizes, grinning from all heights, the groves of slender columns, the circular arches, the semi-pointed arcades, form a maze of architecture such as never could have before, in any age, appeared on one spot.

To wander through the wondrous halls of Penrhyn is like struggling along in a bewildered dream occasioned by having studied some elaborate work on the early buildings of the Saxons and Normans. The eyes are dazzled and the mind confused with the quick succession of astonishing forms; but the result is rather wonder at the imagination or close copying of the artist, and at the enormous wealth which could repay such an exertion of skill, than admiration of the beauty created. Mona marble and fine stone furnish materials for all these sculptured treasures, and slate enters into much of the adornment; for close by are the famous slate-quarries, which have produced the enormous sums expended on this erection. In order to show what can be done with slate, various articles of furniture are placed in the rooms occupying the places usually filled by carved wood and marble; chimney-pieces and tables of polished slate are seen, but the great triumph is a bedstead, beautifully carved, which, though far from elegant, is yet exceedingly curious.

The library and drawing-rooms are very fine, and have even a comfortable appearance: all the house is gorgeously decorated, and all its laboured splendour announces

such immense riches, that it seems as though the gnomes who work gold and silver in the neighbouring hills had all been made slaves of some potent lamp or ring, and had worked incessantly for years in the construction and adornment of the most gigantic mass of architecture that ever was beheld. There are, however, very few specimens of the higher order of art; a few portraits are to be found in one room, which are curious. In particular I was struck with a likeness of the celebrated Anne Clifford, of Cumberland, when a child: she is dressed in a stiff black dress, all over buttons and ornaments, and from under her arm peeps a hideous little dog. As, in her memoirs, she dwells a good deal on her own beauty, one cannot but smile at this comment on her vanity, for, unless the artist did her great injustice, she must have been a singularly ugly child. Two portraits of the Countess of Derby are remarkable: one has a child's doll lying on a table near her, and in the other she is represented holding a feather fan, and covered and half smothered with elaborate ruffs which seem to bristle up in every part of her attire.

The famous Hirlas horn, belonging to an ancient Cambrian prince, the treasure of the castle, we had not an opportunity of seeing, as we found it was carefully locked up from public view. It held the same place as the Saxon *wassail bowl*, and it was customary that those who had the honour of drinking from it should empty the horn at one draught, and then blow it, to prove that they had performed the feat

expected of them. One of the most picturesque objects on the way to the famous slate quarries, is the little mill of Coet Mor, whose wheel is turned by a rushing stream breaking wildly over heaps of rocks.



The slate quarries of Penrhyn are situated near Nant Ffrancon, at a spot called Cae Braich y Cefn, and are exceedingly curious, and even picturesque. We were conducted over them by a very loquacious Irishman, the only person of his nation employed in the works, all the others being Welsh.

Most of these places, where enormous labour produces enormous wealth, are to me displeasing to contemplate; but there is nothing here that conveys an idea of over-tasked

workmen, no horrible underground toil and dark dungeon-like caves, where human creatures are condemned, like souls in penance for some hideous crime, to drag heavy weights and chains through frightful chasms, and delve and dig for ore in spaces not large enough for them to stand upright—here are no deadly vapours, no fatal gases mortal to humanity—all is wide and open in the pure light of day, high, and broad, and healthy. The mountain is cut into ridges of slate, and here and there the projecting edges have formed themselves into graceful shapes: in the very centre of the quarry rises a beautiful conical pillar of slate which the admiration of the workmen has spared, now that their labours have brought it to the shape which it bears. It is a great ornament to the area, and it is to be regretted that in time it must fall, as the slate of which it is composed happens to be of the purest kind. The huts of the workmen scattered over the quarry have a singular effect, and the wild aspect of the men accords well with their abodes. The thundering sound produced by the occasional blasting of the rock is very grand, as it rolls and echoes amongst the caves, and along the heights; and the grey masses glowing in the sun, and reflecting the sky through their rents, have an imposing aspect.

## CHAPTER V.

Nant Ffrancon.—The Ellyllon.—Lake Ogwen.—Falls of Benglog.—Lake Idwal.—Twil Dhu.—Capel Curig.—Costume.—Parallel between Caernarvon and Pau.—The Castle.—The Eagle Tower.—Prynne.—Llanberis.—Snowdon.—Dôlbadarn.—The Captive Owen.—The last Welsh Prince.—Conclusion of the Tragedy.



WE were not induced to linger very long in the slate quarries, being more desirous to make ourselves acquainted with the undisturbed nature which invited us on the way to Capel Curig.

The Vale of Nant Ffrancon, or the Beaver's Hollow, is wild and stupendous in the extreme, — it is an extensive marshy valley, filled with peat, whose black masses are piled in all directions in stacks; numerous alleys filled with the water which drains from it, are cut through the turf on whose surface the graceful cotton plant waves its feathery and snowy tresses, covering the swampy ground, and lending it beauty; numerous water flowers of bright colour give some life to the scene, which would, otherwise be inexpressibly dreary. Huge masses of crumbling rocks bind in the narrow valley,







and assume the strangest and most grotesque shapes, as though the visions of the Welsh bard, Davydd ap Gwilym, were realized, and

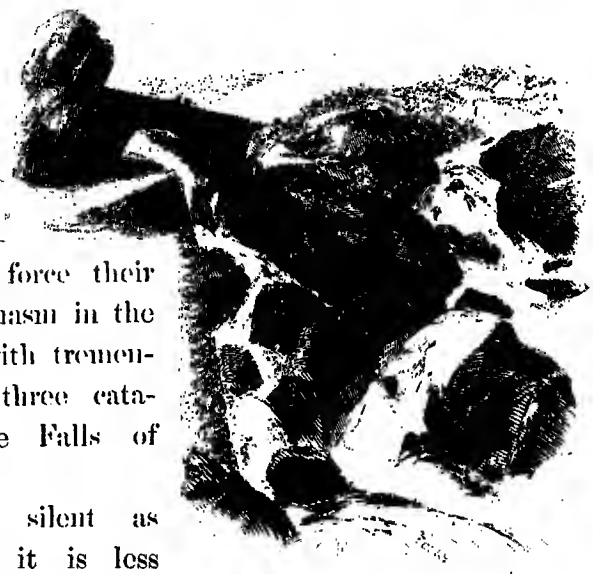
“ There were in every hollow  
A hundred wry-mouth'd elves.”

Indeed the famous and dreaded family of the Ellyllon, who are fond of coming forth in mist and rain, seemed to have pursued and overtaken us just as we had nearly reached the gloomy, dark, and secluded lake of Ogwen. The clouds grew darker, and rolled in heavy masses through the valley, and down the sides of the hills—a chill and hollow wind rose and whistled fearfully along the pass—large drops of rain began to fall, and we thought there was no escape from one of those storms so frequent in these regions; but the spirits sulked themselves into good humour, and did not force us to choose the usual alternative of travellers who fall into their power, for they are said to insist on their taking the uncomfortable choice of three methods of continuing their journey: to go with them ‘above the wind, mid wind, or below wind:’ the first is to be whirled above the tops of the mountains at more than rail-road speed; the last to be hurried along, through brakes and briars, against stones and amongst bogs; and the middle way, generally preferred by those who have experience in the freaks of these elves, is to accompany them at a moderate distance in the air just clearing every obstacle.

We contrived to gain the shore of Lake Ogwen unmolested by all the imps and demons, who seemed to have come on the wings of the blast from their modern retreat on the pedestals of Penrhyn Castle, to visit the haunts where they dwelt in days of yore, before every rock was attacked for its mineral wealth as it is now. On the borders of this solemn lake, however, the minter's hammer is unheard; all is solitary grandeur and gloomy sublimity: mountains are piled on each other, and appear to crowd together round the lake, pressing its dark waters into a small space, deep and generally still, though ruffled when we saw it, by the rushing wind that swept through the hollow of Nant Ffranceon.

The river Ogwen issues from this lake, and the accumulated waters which its rocky basin is unable to contain force their way through a chasm in the rocks, and fall with tremendous force in three cataracts, called the Falls of Benglog.

Solemn and silent as Ogwen appears, it is less



fearful and solitary than another dark lake situated high up amongst the mountains in the vicinity, called Llyn Idwal, where, in the early times of Welsh history, it is recorded, that Idwal, the infant heir of Prince Owen Gwynedd, was drowned by the hand of his foster father, when

“ No human ear but Dunawt's \* heard  
Young Idwal's dying scream.”



The cliffs that encircle this lake are split into a thousand fearful shapes, and a mighty chasm yawns between, called

\* Dunawt was the son of Nefydd Hardd, one of the Fifteen Tribes of North Wales: to him Prince Owen Gwynedd had intrusted his son to be fostered according to the usual custom.

Twl Dhu or the Black Cleft, which is said to be the abode of the unquiet soul of the murderer and the howling and exulting demon who torments him for his hateful crime, a crime,

"Most foul, strange, and unnatural."

No bird will ever dip his wing in that lake, nor pause near its waters.

Nothing can exceed the horror of this spot: the breach in the black rock is like that produced by the sword of Roland in the Pyrenees, but no cheering prospect of far lands opens through—here all is dark, fearful, and tremendously appalling.

The Twl Dhu is sometimes called the Devil's Kitchen; the waters of the lake rush impetuously through its chasm. In memory of the tragedy acted here, the fish, of which there was formerly a profusion, were all deprived, according to received tradition, of one eye—the left being closed—as there are now no fish in the lake it is impossible to verify the truth of this legend.

This neighbourhood is the chosen abode of demons and strange monsters; and once upon a time, it is said, that a hunter pursuing the chase in the valleys between these mountains saw suddenly, perched on a rock, an extraordinary animal, such as had never before been beheld. It was hunched like a buffalo, and was covered with tufts of hair which shone like gold. The daring hunter pursued it over





every obstacle, till he had nearly reached the Twl Dhu, when he overtook and slew it; but he gained little by his exploit, for the animal bellowed so loud that the rocks split in all directions; and neither the huntsman nor his prey was seen afterwards.

The pretty inn at Capel Curig is built of slate, walls and roof and flights of steps, all of a shining grey, contrasting oddly with its gay garden of roses which lies beneath. From this garden is a fine view of Snowdon and its lake, with mountain scenery of great sublimity on all sides. The graceful bridge over Gwyrdd is a beautiful object in the distance:



while Snowdon, Moel Siabod, and the three sister lakes linked together, which extend along this charming valley lie all before the eye. The large and isolated building, untenanted but by ourselves, and total silence prevailing everywhere, caused a sombre and gloomy effect: we were by no means displeased at this accident, for the concourse of

visitors to these retreats generally spoils their character. Capel Curig was less fashionable we found this year than Beddgelert and Tàn y Bwlch, although at one period it attracted more strangers than any other valley in Wales; and a large fortune was made by the last proprietor of the hotel. The place is formed for an artist's haunt: every point affords an attractive subject for a sketch. Amongst these, Gelli Bridge is conspicuous, spanning with its fine arch the brawling mountain stream.



The costume of the Welsh peasants whom we saw on our way struck us as picturesque: the various colours of their dresses, their baskets and large umbrellas and bright handkerchiefs were so like those of France, that we seemed to recog-



nize old acquaintances. The great difference, however, is, that instead of the high pointed cap and wings of Normandy, and the square head-gear of Guienne, all the Welsh women wear black beaver hats, like men's, which, though not pretty, have a neat appearance, and, with a white frilled cap beneath, and a rosy healthy face to set it off, the effect is not displeasing, after a time, though, at the first glance, the aspect of the black hats is ungraceful, particularly in North Wales, where they are large and high : in the South they are flatter, and the rim rounder and broader, so that they have not so masculine an air. The coloured jackets, worn by girls, are generally of pink cotton, and are clean and gay-looking, but ill-made, and wanting the neatness which always distinguishes the French peasants' costume in all parts of the kingdom. Lively groups of young women, some on horseback, riding double, had met us on their way to Bangor market, as we left the town, and on our return we encountered them again, straggling back to the different villages scattered about amongst the mountains. We remarked a good deal of beauty of complexion and eyes amongst those who were very young, but it appears that they very soon lose their youthful appearance, and are certainly extremely plain as old women. The men are generally good-looking, and we thought all the peasantry, in this part, both male and female, particularly tall



and well made, a distinction not often found amongst mountaineers.

From Bangor we directed our course to the famous town where Edward the First erected the most beautiful of his castles, after Conway, and where he caused his queen to travel in the depth of winter over a dreary and dangerous country, from Rhuddlan, in order that the first Prince of Wales might be born in Caernarvon. The approach to Caernarvon is good; a few pretty villa-like houses give a promise of more elegance and grace than is afterwards kept when it is entered; for, like every Welsh town I have seen, there is nothing to admire in either streets or houses; and when all the antique buildings which give a little interest to their appearance shall be cleared away, they will be even less agreeable to the sight than now. Yet Caernarvon is considered a town of much importance in the Principality and is generally named with respect. Like the slovenly ugly town of Pau, in the Pyrenees, which the dwellers and even the visitors there cannot endure to hear spoken of as it really is, this little mean place on the Menai Straits is, however, full of interest for the same reason that Pau is sought—its castle and its mountains. Not that there is the same enthusiasm rising in the mind for Edward of Caernarvon as there is for Henri Quatre, and not that the Château of Pau is to be likened in beauty to Caernarvon Castle; but the admiration is for the prince in one, and for the building in the other. Neither are the charming hills and rocks of Wales to be likened in

grandeur to the snow-crowned mountains of Navarre; yet in Nature all is beautiful, and no one scene touched by her hand can suffer from comparison with another. It is merely in the scale that there exists a superiority; and though Snowdon, considered gigantic in Wales, would be a low hill at the foot of the proud Pic du Midi, and the graceful and towering Rivals would shrink before the range of the Valley d'Aspe, yet on the spot which they adorn, they are as fine as the Pyrenees.

The rushing mountain torrents of Wales, too, are minute to those that rush from the peaks of snow which frown between France and Spain; yet are they beautiful and picturesque in their own scenes, though their course through beds of peat instead of over shining rocks, has coloured them with a rich brown, in place of the transparent jewelled green and blue, such as adorn the wings of the humming-bird, and which one sees glittering and foaming in the waters of the Gaves of Béarn.

Caernarvon castle does not stand so well as Conway, otherwise it would have quite as magnificent an aspect. It is placed on a rock, it is true, but close to the water, and hemmed in with mean buildings, which, clustering round, like ill-bred groups, pressing forward to catch a sight of majesty, prevent the glorious pile from detaching itself, and coming out in all its glory. The most imposing view of its stately towers is obtained from the opposite bank at some distance; and at sea it also appears very majestic, rising from the waters which bathe its base.

When the great conqueror, Edward the First, became possessor of the country whose last prince, the unfortunate Llywelyn, had fallen in his struggle for independence, he found the district called Snowdonia, which included the high lands of Caernarvon and Merionethshire, the most unyielding of his newly-acquired territory; and, to compel submission, he erected the castles of Caernarvon and Conway, besides those which were to awe the natives on the borders. He is said to have built both these unrivalled fortresses on the plan of those he had seen in Palestine; but there is a great diversity in their construction. The towers of Conway are circular, those of Caernarvon are many-sided: both have small minaret-like turrets rising from the others, but they do not resemble each other. It is impossible to award the palm of beauty to either in particular, for both are admirable, stupendous, and attractive.

The stone of which Caernarvon was built is a greyish limestone, shining and hard, scarcely inferior to marble. It was brought from Tŷr Kelyn in Anglesea; and that used for the windows and arches, which are as sharp and fresh as if just finished, is of another kind dug at Vaenol on the banks of the Menai. It was once surrounded on three sides by water, and defended on the fourth from the town; and its strength is such, that it appears impregnable. The walls are so perfect, that it is difficult to imagine they are only shells, and that the castle is really a ruin. Over the grand entrance, which is approached by a flight of steps where formerly a drawbridge, of

course, existed, at a great height stands in a niche the mutilated statue of the founder, supposed to be sheathing his all-subduing sword: but an antiquarian eye alone can decide whether this is his intent, or whether he is drawing the weapon ready for fresh assaults.

There are the remains of four portcullises; the walls are upwards of seven feet thick, and enclose between two and three acres of ground, part of which was occupied by defences, and part forming the interior courts. The enormous masses of ruin presented to the eye on entering this court are extraordinary; some of the huge towers are tolerably perfect; and the gallery of communication which seemed to have extended all round the castle, is singularly uninjured in some parts. The largest of the towers is called "The Eagle Tower," the name said to be derived from the figure of an eagle which once surmounted it; and it is thought several other pinnacles were similarly terminated, which has given rise to the idea, that there originally stood a castle on this spot built by the Romans, which Edward re-edified, employing some part of the stones, and these ornaments, in his new erection. The chamber is shown where the amiable Elionor, so devoted to her husband, gave birth to the son, whose birth was hailed with rejoicings that, had his fate been foreseen, should have been changed to wailing. His birth took place on St. Mark's day, April 25, 1284. Like the room shown as that in which Henri Quatre first saw the light, there is some dispute as to which part of the tower had the honour of being the birth-

place of the young Prince of Wales ; and a closet of exceedingly small dimensions is sometimes pointed-out as the right spot, something similar to that where the eagle conqueror of England first “chipped his shell” in the fortress of Falaise.

The gate called “The Queen’s,” by which Elionor of Castile entered the castle, is placed at so enormous a height from the ground, that how she reached it appears a marvel. The “jealous bridge” which gave her passage, must have been suspended in air over a wide foss, probably communicating with some outwork now destroyed, which was ascended by a flight of steps on an inclined plane. The archway in the interior is very perfect towards the court, and the whole is amazingly stupendous and elaborate. One of the towers is shown as having been the prison of William Prynne, so persecuted in the time of Charles the First for his opinions. He was the bitter enemy of Archbishop Laud, as that prelate had been his ; and both showed but little Christian feeling in the vengeance they indulged in towards one another.

It is a great pleasure, on a bright warm summer day, to sit for hours in the grassy court of this magnificent castle, to climb amongst the ruins, and thread the mazes of the long passages and corridors, still firm and strong, with their fine vaulting and unbroken stairs, to look from the battlements over the harbour, dotted with numerous sails and passing and pausing steam-boats to and from Liverpool and Dublin, and to trace the shore of Anglesea, and the blue mountains of Caernarvonshire.

There is a brilliancy and gaiety about the scene which renders this part of the town very agreeable, particularly those houses at one of which we lodged during our stay, which border the walls, and whose gardens end in a mural terrace which is ascended by steep steps, giving a view all over the harbour, and presenting a continual change of great beauty and animation. There is a good walk along the quay much used as a promenade, but it is not well kept, and is interrupted and dusty. Ferry boats are constantly plying from this to the opposite shore, and to Anglesea; and the gleaming of their red sails in the sun is watched by many idlers from the walls and quays with much interest. There are pleasant strolls immediately across the near ferry, along the shore of the Straits for several miles, and in some neighbouring public groves which border the river.

The walls of the town are tolerably entire, and are extremely massive. Several of the gates are also preserved, but are not remarkably ornamental. Immediately round the castle square, the buildings are particularly slovenly and dirty, and reminded us of several French towns where much dirt must be waded through in order to arrive at architectural treasures. There are very few ancient houses, and none worthy of attention; nor are the churches either antique or handsome, a fact much to be deplored in most Welsh towns. The parish church is at Llanbeblig, according to custom some distance from the town, and is disfigured by the whitewash, which is in such esteem here that sometimes the very roofs of

the houses are daubed over with it. There are a few fine windows, which show it to have been once a structure of importance. It stands in a pretty secluded spot within view of the distant hills. The graves are bound round with a sort of fringed basket-work, and most of them are planted with evergreens and flowers, seldom however renewed; so that although the custom sounds well in description, it has its disadvantages; and the mounds so adorned have not the simple neatness of our grassy hillocks where nothing is attempted. It is true the season was in general very dry during our journey, which might account for the withered, neglected appearance of the graves in the churchyards throughout Wales; but I was impressed rather with a sad than a pleased feeling in observing how soon the sorrow for the loss of relatives which prompted the first planting and strewing of their resting-places must have passed away, since they were thus left untended and forgotten.

Between the town and the church is pointed out some slight remains, supposed to indicate the Roman city of Segontium, where Helen the mother of Publicius, to whom, as a saint, the church of Llanbeblig is dedicated, was born. A spring here still bears her name.

On a remarkably warm summer's morning, such as we had rarely been so fortunate as to experience during our journey, we set out in a jaunting-car from Caernarvon on an excursion to Llanberis Lake and Mountains, the great objects of attraction in the neighbourhood: ten or twelve miles is the extreme distance from each other of any of these spots, so that



a hurried traveller can very quickly visit all the remarkable sights in Wales, without occupying much time: we were not however anxious to hasten through any of these beautiful scenes, as our time was not of consequence. As we advanced on the road we were particularly attracted by the appearance of a range of transparently blue mountains, which, in three peaks, rose gracefully before us, and assumed a form more exquisitely elegant than any we had yet noticed. These were Yr Eifl, or The Rivals, with whose beauties we afterwards became more familiar as we



advanced in Caernarynshire. They present certainly the finest outline of any of the Welsh hills, though they are much inferior to many others in height. Our eyes were now strained to take in Snowdon, glimpses alone of whose bold head we had as yet obtained, and in a few moments the monarch of North Wales rose majestically between two lesser hills, like a patriarch supported by his sons: he disappeared at intervals as his nearer vassals obtruded themselves, but at length came grandly forth overtopping the

varied range of Llanberis in uncontrouled command. Descending into the vale the great height of this mountain is not so conspicuous as it appears in many other positions, and we were surprised that, on approaching so near, the great Yr-Eyri did not more impress us with its loftiness.

In days of yore, when this mountain of the Eagle and the Snow was volcanic, and sent forth its fires as did once the now extinct Puy de Dôme of Auvergne, surrounded in the same manner as that great monarch of the centre of France is, by numerous smaller heights, perhaps all blazing too, the valley of Llanberis must indeed have presented an appalling spectacle ; how different from the peaceful and lovely scene we witnessed on the day we first approached its foot !

All the inundated meadows and the lower part of the lake were covered in profusion with the white water-lily, holding up her transparent chalice to the sun, and showing the golden cup within her bosom as she seems to float on the surface of the waters supported by her broad leaves confined by their crimson stem from wandering away with the breeze ; countless gilded water-flowers were peeping up through the green leaves and the snowy cotton flower was waving along the banks in all directions. A few tufts of young heath were beginning to expand, giving promise of the beauty they could bestow when the summer was more advanced, and all the rocks must be purple with their fragrant blossoms. The two lakes shone like a mirror in the sun, as if in contrast to the gloom of those waters we had last seen in the rival valley





a few days before. The first of these lakes is about a mile in length, and the second, connected with it by a narrow stream, is much longer, but not so deep. Mountains of the most graceful and singular forms rise from their edges in endless variety, and apparently countless numbers.

Erlideir, Garn and Glydair on one hand, Crib Goch, and Carnedd Iiggon on the other, are a few of the names of the most conspicuous. One was pointed out to us as Trevaen, a triple-headed rock, bearing a supposed resemblance to three pilgrims, and Wyddfa, as the Welsh call the highest point. Snowdon looks powerfully over all, as if marshalling them to their duty as his body-guard,—even so Llywelyn called his chiefs when compelled in these passes to struggle for his possessions and his life.

On an insulated rocky point, of ~~no~~ great elevation, just where the two lakes meet, stands a dark tower, the first object that attracts the eye on entering the vale of Llanberis. It commands the valley on each side, and is itself a remarkable object, which promises some strange tale of times gone by. The green spot from whence it rears its head was called Padarn's Meadow, for there once lived, retired from human ken, a holy anchorite of that name, who chose this solitude in which to spend his remaining years in penitence and prayer. The castle of Dôlbadarn rose from the site of his cell, but by what hand constructed is unknown; all that is certain is, that it belonged to Llywelyn, the last Welsh prince who kept it as one of his strongest holds, and who here

confined for upwards of twenty years his unfortunate brother Owen Goch, or the Red. It was true that Owen, who had been named with himself joint sovereign of Wales, had endeavoured to take sole possession of the Principality, and probably, had his plan been successful, Llywelyn would have been the captive instead of himself, but it is nevertheless a stain on the name of a prince who is generally looked upon as a hero.

During all the struggles of his country for freedom, Owen remained a prisoner in this fortress on the lake, hopeless and abandoned to his fate, by all but the bard who thus laments over him :—

#### THE CAPTIVE OF DOLBADARN.\*

From yonder height a captive's sighs  
 Are wafted towards me by the gale—  
 There chain'd—abandon'd—Owen lies  
 And I still live to tell the tale !  
 To tell how, by a brother's doom  
 Your towers are Owen's living tomb.  
 I roam'd amongst these mountains drear  
 Lamenting for my hero gone,  
 When sounds of sorrow met my ear—  
 I paused, and started at the tone,  
 For in the voice I loved so well  
 I seem'd to hear my Owen's knell.

\* This Welsh Ode, or Awdl, on his imprisonment, was composed by a bard with the startling cognomen, to Saxon ears, of Howel Voel ap Griffri ap Pwyll Gwyddel : it is singularly similar to the ode of the Troubadour on Richard Cœur de Lion.

Of mighty and of royal birth,  
 Of gallant deeds and courage high,  
 What Saxon dared invade our hearth,  
 Or draw the sword when he was nigh !  
 In war we knew him by his broken shield,  
 Like the great Rod'rick never born to yield.

His palace gates no more unclosed  
 No harp is heard within his hall,  
 His friends are vassals to his foes,  
 Grief and despair have vanquish'd all.  
 He the defender—he, the good and just  
 Is gone ; his name, his honours, in the dust !

He prized but treasure to bestow,  
 He cherish'd state but to be free ;  
 None from his walls unspeed might go,  
 To all he gave—but most to me !

Ruddy his cheeks as morning's light,  
 His ready lance was firm and bright,  
 The crimson stains that on it glow  
 Tell of the Saxons' overthrow.

Shame that a prince like this should lie  
 An outcast, in captivity.  
 And oh ! what years of ceaseless shame  
 Shall cloud the Lord of Snowdon's name !

Dayydd, called also Goch, or The Red, a younger brother of Llywelyn, who had joined the conspiracy of Owen, was for a time confined here, but escaped, and long occasioned much confusion in the country by his turbulence. He is looked

upon as a traitor, for having allied himself with Edward the First, from whom he accepted lands and titles, but afterwards abandoned the English, and embraced the Welsh cause against the king. Forgiven by Llywelyn, he joined his forces to those of his brother, and for a long period harassed Edward by his violence.

When the affairs of Wales were drawing to a close, and the gallant Llywelyn had been betrayed and had fallen at Bualt, Davydd now considered himself hereditary Prince of Wales—history does not say that he had released his elder brother, Gwen; perhaps he had already ended his days a captive—he defended himself in Dôlbadarn Castle to the last, but treachery was again at work, and “Welsh faith” once more asserted its claim to contempt. Davydd fled from his stronghold with all his family—his wife and seven children—and they concealed themselves in the caverns of the dark morasses of Llanberis for some time, till they were hunted out, and by his own countrymen was Prince Davydd carried in chains to Rhuddlan: from thence to be conveyed to Shrewsbury, and put to that excruciating death to which Edward so mercilessly condemned him.

It was while in these passes, Davydd was occupied in his last desperate defence, that his brother Llywelyn was waiting for reinforcements from the Marches, from those chiefs who were in the meantime calculating which of the parties were likely to be most successful, and which it would be most prudent to join. Llywelyn suspecting no treachery, was



imprudent enough to quit North Wales, where he had just gained several advantages, and took the opportunity of a pause to ravage the lands of several of the Welsh chieftains who were in favour with Edward. This proceeding enraged the English king, who sent orders to his captains to cross the Severn to Caermarther and succour his allies.

Llywelyn continued his way to Buallt with his forces; and it was there that the final scene of the restless drama of his life was to be played. His fall was a sad one, for he was, like so many other brave men, the victim of deception and perfidy. He had appointed to meet the border chiefs in a valley in this neighbourhood to confer with them on matters of importance, and, having posted the main body of his troops at a bridge called Pont Orewyn, which commanded the passage of the Wye, he considered himself secure from attack, and attended only by a squire he went unarmed into the valley of Aberdw, expecting to meet his friends. No sooner was he departed than the bridge was attacked by the English, at the head of a strong body, most of them natives of Buallt, who had been gained over to betray the Welsh prince. A desperate fight ensued, but after a gallant defence the Welsh were defeated with great loss; and Edward's followers, headed by Sir Edmund Mortimer, passed triumphantly over.

Llywelyn, meantime, was waiting in a small grove in the valley for the tardy lords of the conference, when his squire came to inform him that he heard a great outcry at the

bridge. The prince inquired if the Welsh were still in possession, and, finding that they were so, calmly replied, that he would not stir from that spot, though the whole English army were on the other-side of the river. While he was yet speaking the grove was surrounded, and the lances of his enemies gleamed through the trees. He endeavoured to make good his retreat and join the other troops he had stationed on the mountain, who were drawn up in battle array, and were waiting his return. He was pursued by Adam de Francon, a soldier of the enemy, who did not know who he was, but judged him to be one of the Welsh fugitives, and coming up to him plunged his spear into his body. Llywelyn was unarmed and incapable of defence, and fell heavily to the ground bathed in blood. De Francon, ignorant of the importance of his act, hastened back to his party, whom he joined in their attack on the Welsh, who defended the neighbouring mountain. For three hours the soldiers of Llywelyn stood their ground and were then overpowered, having lost two thousand men. Their prince and leader was all this time lying in a dying state on the ground, where he was discovered by a returning troop, amongst whom was a White Friar, of whom he begged the last offices of religion, and having received them, expired. It was not long before his body was recognized, and great was the joy and exultation of the English to find the great Welsh Prince no more. Adam de Francon, overjoyed at the deed he had performed, claimed the privilege of cutting off the head

of Llywelyn, which was immediately sent to Edward at Conway Castle.

Thus finished the career of the last of the Welsh princes.

It is said that Edward, after Llywelyn's death, made a proposition to Davydd to give him his life, if he would consent to leave the kingdom for ever, and spend the remainder of his days in the Holy Land. On this condition he offered to provide for his only daughter. The prince refused, was inhumanly butchered at Shrewsbury, and his daughter was condemned to the cloister, together with her cousin, the only daughter of Llywelyn, for the remainder of her life.

The conclusion of the tragedy of this family was a grand pageant, in which Edward rode in triumph through London, over whose gates were fixed the heads of the two Welsh princes: the King himself carrying in great state the relics which had been found upon his victim's person, which, adorned with precious stones, he placed with his own hands on the high altar in Westminster Abbey. After this, to celebrate his conquest of North Wales, he proclaimed a solemn tournament at Nevin in Caernarvonshire, which was attended by all the chivalry of Europe.

## CHAPTER VI.

Ceunant Mawr.—The Lost Child of Mount Ælia.—Miss Janet Wilkinson.—The Blue Vale.—Pass of Llanberis.—Nant Gwynant.—Lake Vortigern.—The Goblin Builders.—Merlin.—Viviana.—Wilson.—Madoc.—The Pedlar.—The Knockers.—The Little Steamer.—Caernarvon by Moonlight.—The Fort.—Glynlifon.—Yr Eifl.—Cilmin Droed Dhu.—The Demons.—The Llifon.



RT seems to vie with nature, in the valley of Llanberis, in producing the grand and terrific ; and the frequent blasting of the slate rocks in the mountains adjacent has an effect extremely awful as the sound re-echoes from hollow to hollow along the range of peaks. There are copper mines also here, where the sound of mortal hammer may be now heard, though once the working of these subterranean treasures was the exclusive occupation of the gnomes known by the scared peasants, who heard them at their employment, as The Knockers.

After lingering some time at the ruined tower of Dôlbadern, we proceeded to the water-fall, within a short but rugged walk of the inn, called Ceunant Mawr, the fall of the Great Chasni. It is a grand and solitary spot, and the

immense ravine of rocks down which the water dashes, sinks far below the mountain of emerald turf from whence we gazed upon it, quietly seated amidst flowers and sunshine. The water gushes first from a fissure in the rock, and, falling headlong over a mass of bristling crags, is arrested by huge rocks which turn its startled course suddenly aside, and it leaps at once over a high black ledge, thundering into a dark pool below, and so runs murmuring along a rocky bottom, till the eye loses it amongst shrubs and projecting rocks. It is a remarkably beautiful cascade, all animation and brilliancy, and, in the perfect seclusion whence it starts into life, is a charming surprise. A pretty little Welsh boy with ruddy cheeks stood by us while we sat contemplating it, and by signs indicated that we ought to follow his steps to see the waters from a better position; he seemed greatly satisfied that we obeyed his persuasive gesticulations and allowed him to be our guide to a higher spot, when he departed in great glee at having gained his point, and left us to our enjoyment. Just such a smiling rosy creature as this might have been the poor boy whose melancholy fate forms a rural tragedy recorded in this neighbourhood. He was but seven years old, the son of the person who kept the inn of Llanberis in 1805. He had been consigned to the care of his grandmother, who lived in a cottage amongst the mountains of Nant y Bettws, not far from the pool of Cewellyn. His mother went there to see him, and on her departure the heart of the poor child overflowed with the recollection of

his home, and the image of its former joys, his brothers, sisters, and his father's love; he formed a secret resolution to follow his mother on her return to Llanberis, and kept her in view for some time as she continued her way across the mountain, little imagining who was so near her. The shades of evening began to fall, and the sky became gloomy—in a few minutes flakes of snow descended, which came thicker and faster; the mother drew her cloak round her and hastened her steps—the child by degrees lost sight of her, and, the darkness increasing, he got bewildered—he called loudly, but the wind was louder than his cries—he screamed, but the howling of the blast, through the rocks was shriller than his voice; once his mother started, for she thought she recognised his tones amidst the tempest, but she concluded that it was but fancy, as she had left him warm and safe at his grandmother's cottage, and she reached her own abode drenched and chilled, congratulating herself on his security.

Some days passed—his grandmother missed him, but was not uneasy, as she imagined his mother had taken him away in a fit of maternal weakness, without naming her intention; but inquiries began to be made—the child had not been heard of, and the fearful truth was but too apparent. The peasants round collected, in pitying sorrow; a search was made in all directions, and the dead body of the innocent creature was found on the edge of a precipice near the summit of Mount Ælia.

This sad tale has suggested a subject to Miss Janet Wilkinson for a beautiful and pathetic poem, unequalled in grace and tenderness, which she has inserted in a volume called "Sketches and Legends amidst the Mountains of North Wales." I first met with these poems in the country, and find they afford more exquisite descriptions of the scenery of Wales than any I have seen either in verse or prose. This young poetess must certainly have climbed the height of Snowdon, and, having passed the night there, become inspired with the *Awen*, or poetical fervour, now so rare amongst native bards—and so well painted by herself. This idea of Snowdon's power is singularly similar to the notion entertained in Persia of a poet's watching in a secluded spot, and becoming inspired, as Hafiz was when the Green Spirit appeared to him and presented the bowl of immortality, whose draught gave him endless fame. It is long since Poetry deserted the country where she was once so cherished, and which seemed so well understood by the famous bards whose Triads describe its attributes: "There are," say they, "three primary requisites for poetry; an eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and a resolution that dares follow nature."

"There are three purities of poetry:—Pure truth, pure language, and pure conception."

Whoever shall read Miss Wilkinson's work will agree that she possesses all the Bard's requisites.

In a deep hollow crowded with encircling mountains, which



seem to peer over each other's heads, stands the deserted parish church of Llanberis, dedicated to St. Peris, a holy personage, said to be a Romish cardinal, but who must originally have belonged to those pagan deities called Peris, or Fairies, who guard fountains and frequent solitary places. The "Peri's well" still exists, though the occult properties are now seldom tested; it could once reveal the future, and foretold events by the agency of a beautiful silver fish, which appeared at intervals in the crystal water: in monkish times diseases were cured at this well, and pilgrimages were made to the church, now in the last stage of desolation, damp, and decay, although the parish is very large, and calls for some attention to its spiritual wants. Of course there is a flourishing dissenting chapel in the neighbourhood, always well cared for, and boasting a good congregation. The forests of oak, of which we read as having covered these mountains, have disappeared to the last tree, and the water-lilies and



cotton-plants are all of vegetable nature to be seen in the valleys.

The rocks press closer on each other when the lake and church are passed; and the Blue Vale, Cwm-Glas, extends for several miles in gloomy grandeur, the rocks almost excluding day, and assuming strange and terrific forms. This is the famous pass of Llanberis, so celebrated for its wild beauties; numerous vales extend in this direction, all full of grandeur and sublime horrors, less appalling now than in days when no grand road led through the very heart of the mountains to Capel Curig and Beddgelert. The pedestrian, however, has still the means of secluding himself altogether from the travelling world, and by plunging into the deep recesses of Drws y Coed, i. e. The Door of the Wood, the Vale of Nantlle, and others, he may behold Nature in her most magnificent aspect, and forget that the innovating hand of man has made the passes of the changeless mountains easy to the idle and the careless.

This part of Wales, indeed, cannot be seen to advantage by persons who merely depend on the wheels of a carriage; and all the time we were in the neighbourhood I heard with envy of excursions on foot to wondrous and glorious scenes, such as I had no means of reaching, and where even the mountain ponies could not safely convey a timid traveller. The lover of wild nature would do well to fix his head-quarters in one of these valleys, and pass a whole summer exploring their beauties at his leisure: he would not be disappointed, even

though the snow-crowned Pyrenees or the rugged Monts Dorés were familiar to him. It is possible that the frequenter of the Swiss Alps might not be so well satisfied—though all that is sublime is here, except the eternal snows and the icy oceans of those unapproachably magnificent regions.

Nant Gwynant, The Vale of Waters, so called from its beautiful Lake, extends for about six miles, and is full of sublimity and beauty—an excellent road runs through the whole valley. Here rises the steep rock called Dinas Emrys, the Fort of Merlin, the site of many wondrous traditions connected with the famous bard and necromancer,

“Who could call spirits from the vasty deep.”

It is said that Vortigern, the British Prince, after having in an evil hour trusted the treacherous Saxons and accepted the hand of Rowena, who was to him and his country another Florinda, retired into the recesses of Snowdon, and there began to revolve in his mind the means of contending against those whom he found too powerful and dangerous. The fatal feast had taken place on Salisbury Plain, and Hengist's awful words, “*Nimed eur seaxes*,”\* had been followed by the massacre of three hundred and sixty British nobles; and their imprudent and weak prince, who had suffered himself to be lured by beauty, had been dragged captive to a dungeon, till he yielded to all the demands of the victors.

\* “Take your swords.”





Sullen and heart-stricken, but not yet quite subdued, Vortigern summoned to his aid the sages of his kingdom, and by their advice commenced the construction of a fortress in Nant Gwynant, which was to secure him against attacks, and make him independent of his foes. All the materials for his building were got together, but the workmen found, to their amazement, that certain spirits called the Goblin Builders, whose dwelling is in Snowdon, every night removed the walls that they had constructed with so much care.

The wise men consulted together, and at length delivered their opinion to Vortigern. "This castle," they said, "will never be completed, until the stones are sprinkled with the blood of a child who has had no earthly father." The king sent east and west, in every valley, and in every town, throughout Britain; and still his workmen toiled, and still the Goblin Builders destroyed all they had done. One day, as one of his emissaries was passing through a village, he observed a group of boys at play: presently they began to dispute with one, and called him in contempt—"a son without a father." Vortigern's messenger immediately sought the mother of this child, and, having secured both her and her son, brought them to the king. On being questioned, the female acknowledged that her fate had been strange, and that the child before them owed his birth to an Incubus.

The death of this wonderful child was decreed beforehand; but even on his journey he had so amazed his conductors by the astonishing wisdom of his remarks, that they could not

but report of him in such a manner as to excite the interest of Vortigern, into whose presence he was brought, and desired to reply to the sages, who were to decide on his fate. The boy, who was called Merlin, at the first word entirely confounded and shamed the wise conclave assembled, for he showed their ignorance, and offered to point out to Vortigern the reason of the failure of his building, if he would grant him a private interview. This was granted, and leading the king to the top of the mountain, Merlin made him look within, and there disclosed to him the fearful sight of two dragons furiously contending—one white, the other red. “While these contend,” said Merlin, “it will be impossible to build your castle—they have great power, and the spirits obey them; but you see before you one who is the son of a greater, and who has knowledge which can controul them. You cannot sacrifice me if you would; instead of that, I can be your friend if you will.”

After this, there was no impediment to the building of Vortigern’s castle, and great and wonderful were the works which Merlin performed there. The king afterwards gave it to the necromancer for his own dwelling; and he constructed another in the Vale of Gwrtheyrn, where Vortigern at length retired to end his days, after the persecutions of the Saxons, and the rage of his own subjects had driven him to despair.

To this day, the curious inquirer may behold the Cell of the Diviner, in a dark rock, and near it the Tomb of the

Magicians—which latter is a huge stone supposed to cover the grave where the ignorant *wise men* were inclosed, who had given false counsel to the British king. Whoever has courage to enter a black cavern nearly on the top of Snowdon, may, by searching far enough, discover the golden chair which Merlin concealed there from the Saxons, and the jewels and money which still lie scattered in heaps around. Some of the enterprising miners who now search into the very heart of Snowdon will, doubtless, come upon these treasures some day.

The Welsh traditions name this neighbourhood as the scene of Merlin's famous grotto, which he constructed for the love of the fairy Viviana, or the White Serpent, with whom he lived in that magical retreat, and whose treachery converted it into his eternal dungeon. Some say it is to be found, covered with the stone which can never be removed, near Caermarthen, though the Bretons claim it as belonging to their country. The voice of the mighty master may at all events be frequently heard here amongst the hollow rocks, reverberating along the mountains in thunder, and bewailing his weakness in yielding to the force of beauty, as his pupil Vortigern had done, to their mutual destruction.

Not far from the spot rendered awful by the incantations of Merlin, the celebrated voyager and discoverer of America, Prince Madoc, retired to meditate before he set forth on the expedition which immortalized him. Near Llyn Dinas he founded a chapel, and offered up his vows for success in those

hallowed precincts; often strolling, lost in lonely musing, along the lovely valley of Cwm Llan, over which Snowdon casts his giant shadow. The artist has here an endless field of study; and here one of the first of his ennobling profession, Wilson, formed some of his finest pictures. Strange and sad is it to record, that the whole life of this great genius was passed in poverty, and that he died of a broken heart at last. He was pining in want amidst the very scenes whose delineation has since given him fame; while millions were being extracted from the bowels of the beautiful mountains whose outward aspect enchanted him!

It is related that the valuable copper mine of Drws y Coed was discovered about a century since in the following manner: A pedlar, who was crossing the mountains with his heavy pack, fatigued with long travel and the scorching sun, threw himself down in a sheltered nook to rest, and fell asleep. He was suddenly awakened by a tremendous report close to his ear—sharp and electrifying. On hastening to the spot from whence he imagined the sound proceeded, he discovered a large aperture in the mountain, and found, as if recently forced from the heart of the rock, a mass of substance of a metallic nature, strongly impregnated with an odour of sulphur. He related this adventure to some travellers whom he encountered on his way; and, on its truth being verified, researches were made which led to the discovery of the mine.

According to the traditions of the country, at least such was the belief in more simple and ignorant times, there is a



sure way of discovering mines by attending to the warnings of a tribe of subterraneous spirits, called Knockers, to whom are known all the riches of the metallic mountains. The Knockers are not always to be trusted, as, like most spirits, they are fond of playing mischievous tricks; but those who attend attentively, and with faith, to their movements, will seldom fail to be rewarded. The villagers in the neighbourhood of mines often listen at the mouth of the caverns; and though these gnomes are not seen, they have been frequently heard to carry on conversations together; but they speak in so low a tone, that no one has ever been able to catch the meaning of their words. If a stream runs through a mine, it is a great convenience to these little people, who appear to be very clean and neat in their dwellings, and are often engaged in a great wash by the side of the subterranean water.

Several of the finest mines in Wales have been discovered in consequence of the diligence of the Knockers, for they have guided the miner to a rich vein more than once. They are sometimes heard by hundreds using their little hammers, "boring, blasting, and *beating down the loose*;" but though the mortal miners engaged in the same occupation constantly hear them, if they pause to remark the fact to each other, the gnomes stop also, and only resume their work when they find their fellow-labourers are busy. This has led some unbelieving persons to imagine that the sound is a mere echo heard in the caves; but one who has had experience will tell how the

Knockers avoid performing the same part of the work the others are engaged on; and invariably are at one kind of occupation while they are busy at another. It is a singular piece of caprice on their parts, that when once the mortal miners have hit upon a fine vein, these little spirits discontinue their own labours, and are heard no more. Some venture to affirm that the Knockers are nothing more than the rushing or dropping of water; certain it is, that miners are by no means terrified at their vicinity, feeling that they are fellow-workmen and good friends.

After having spent many hours amidst the wonderful and charming scenes presented by the valley of Llanberis, we returned in the evening to Caernarvon. The sky was without a cloud, except the rich gold and purple of sunset which lighted up the towers and minarets of the magnificent castle, making every loophole and arrow-slit clear against the bright background of the wide-spreading sea. Holyhead shone out conspicuously; the Parys Mountain showed its rich head; and all Caernarvon glittered with the last rays of the hottest summer-day the season had bestowed. Numerous vessels were setting sail to enjoy the cool evening breeze in the Straits,—fishermen in groups on the shore were drawing their nets; and we enjoyed a stroll on the terrace beneath the walls, till the shades descended and closed the enjoyment of the day.

Our next expedition had something of novelty in it. We had been invited to take up our abode at the house of a friend

during the remainder of our stay in the neighbourhood of Caernarvon, and were to repair thither in the cool of the evening in a small steamer, in which our future host was accustomed to make excursions on the Straits. We were hanging over the wall of our garden which formed part of the old town ramparts, when, by the light of a bright moon, we saw the steamer for which we were watching arrive, and a little boat put off from it, which directed its course towards the quay.



We were soon on board, and rowing briskly towards the vessel, whose dark bulk lay quietly in a stream of moonlight awaiting our arrival. The whole surface of the sea was glittering in the bright rays, and the solemn towers of the castle lay reflected in shadow on the waves from which they seemed to rise. The enclosed town of Caernarvon, walled and fortified, and guarded by its great fortress, assumed, in the uncer-

tain light, the appearance of its ancient self; and one might well fancy it exactly as it looked at the period when King Edward and his Queen, and the First English Prince of Wales were holding their court there. The tiny steamer went gaily on; and, after a rather long and very agreeable voyage, we landed on a low pebbly shore beneath the walls of a fort. We climbed the bank of shingles, and found ourselves standing before a regularly fortified embattled building, whose formidable cannon pointed towards the sea, and whose turretted walls were ready for defence in case of necessity.

The moon was still in full splendour, and by her light we examined the passages and courts, ramparts and draw-bridges, of this miniature castle, which is called Belau Fort, and was erected by the late Lord Newborough, who had a passion for military works. It is of considerable extent, and is occupied by the present family during the summer as a bathing retreat, and a place of occasional recreation. Happy and merry parties from Glynlifon frequently fill its chambers; and the noble proprietor is indulgent enough to give permission to visitors from Caernarvon to land there, and enjoy their picnics in this charming and unique spot.

The carriage which was to take us to our destination was waiting at the gate of the Fort; and our drive, of five miles along the moonlight shore, was one of the pleasantest imaginable..

We were now in a part of Caernarvonshire not often visited by strangers, as it is a little out of the direct route.

The shape of the country is very irregular; one portion, that which we had reached, is a large peninsulated point running far out into the Irish Sea; the Menai Straits separating it from Anglesea, and its furthest extremity being the little island of Enlli, or Bardsey, once celebrated for all its inhabitants being Saints. This part of Wales is peculiarly wild and singular, and answers more to the opposite coast of Brittany than most of the country. There are strange traditions belonging to it, although, as usual, they are nearly worn out amongst the people who are far beyond their Breton neighbours in information and a contempt for old-world stories. Still it is here that Vortigern's Valley extends, and its legends cannot be altogether forgotten—it is here that the mysterious island of saints may be visited, and all its wonders are not swept away. Here, after following St. Benno through Wales, from Holywell, we found him again at Clynog; and here we approached those beautiful mountains of Yr Eifl, called in English the Rivals, once dedicated to Fire Worship.

Great part of this district belongs to the estate of Lord Newborough, who has a charming place called Glynlifon, situated on the pretty brawling river Llifon, whose origin is in the Cilgwyn Mountains.

This family bear in their arms *a man's leg coupé à la cuisse, sable*, in memory of their ancestor, a certain Cilmin Troed-du, or Kilmin with the black foot, one of the Fifteen Tribes of North Wales. Those who wish to account in a

natural way for the circumstance of a knight having a black leg, relate that in a desperate encounter the limb was so much injured, as to threaten mortification, and was obliged to be amputated; but the received opinion is something less common-place.

The fact is, that Cilmin, living in the vicinity of necromancers and demons, became the intimate friend of one of the former, who knew all the secrets of nature, except one, which he was aware was contained in a volume, written by no human hand, and guarded by a demon, whose abode was near the summit of the forked mountains of Yr Eifl, (for so the Rivals were formerly called,) or the Fiery. The necromancer, though potent in his art, had no power even to attempt gaining possession of this mystic book: but he pined after the knowledge it concealed, and he imparted to his friend Cilmin the trouble of his soul. The knight, who feared nothing, instantly offered to dare any adventure, in order to satisfy his longing, and set forth, armed at all points, to the dangerous spot. The sage informed him that he must use the utmost caution in possessing himself of the magic volume, and be particularly careful in crossing a certain brook at the foot of the mountain, where the demon's jurisdiction ended, not to wet his feet, as evil might otherwise befall him.

Cilmin departed towards the mountain of the mighty Twins (another name for the Rivals), and, after riding several hours, entered the gloomy vale called Nant-y-Gwytheyrn, which is crowded with rugged and lofty mountains, and opens

only to the sea. He spurred his steed over the the stony way, climbed the sides of a steep declivity, and arrived at Tref y Caerau, or the Town of the Fortresses, which runs from one side of Yr Eifl to the other, and consists of an immense rampart of huge stones encircling the summit of the mountain, and ending in a point which is almost inaccessible. These rocky barriers are filled with cells of every form, and at the time when Cilmin ventured on his errand they were known to be the resort of the demons who served the chief spirit, whose abode was on the highest pinnacle of the rock : there he dwelt with a hideous and terrible giantess, his companion, who executed his biddings, and caused infinite desolation in the country. Their constant study was the Book, which in their hands taught only evil, but looked into by Christian eyes would disclose much that would serve mankind.

The giantess inhabited a cell on the south side of Tref y Caerau : it is called to this day Moel-carn-y Guweh, and now rises to a cone, being crowned by a huge pile of stones like the ruins of a fortress : but at that time, the stones were in the lap of the giantess ; and her intention was to heat them red-hot at the demon's fire, and cast them down upon the neighbouring fields to destroy them. Suddenly, she beheld Cilmin riding impetuously up the steep, and, taken by surprise, she started from her seat, and let all the stones fall from her apron ; whence the place is since called The Apron full of Stones.

Then followed a fearful combat with the giantess, the demon, and the knight, but the latter, by the help of his good sword and its cross handle, was able at length to fell the demon to the earth, and snatch from him the Book which he always held beneath his serpent wing. No sooner had the knight gained his prize, than he commenced a retreat; and spurring his horse, he began to descend the mountain, with the whole city of demons howling at his heels. On he went, over rock and through valley, making the ground re-echo to his courser's hoofs, and, still keeping the rabble ront at bay. At length he reached the stream of the Llifon, and there, just on the edge, his gallant steed fell, exhausted and dying, and he felt that the demons were gaining upon him: he knew that they could not cross the river; but it was so wide that scarcely was it possible for him to leap it—to ford it was impossible: the current was too strong. An effort, he felt, must be made, and he hesitated no longer, but, rising on the back of his fallen steed, he gave a desperate spring, and gained the opposite side: at that very moment his foot slipped, one of his legs sunk into the water, and it was with extreme difficulty he could draw it forth again and manage to climb up the bank. He felt as if a red-hot, iron grasp had seized his leg beneath the water; and he heard a low chuckling laugh as he hurried away from the stream, and sought the hermitage of his friend the necromancer, to whom he gave the book which he had gained at such risk.



From that time the limb which the demon had caught became coal black, and the knight was lame to his dying day; he always, in memory of the event, wore a suit of black armour, which caused him to be called Kilmen Troed, or Droed Du.

The pretty little river Llifon now runs through the grounds to which it gives name, sparkling and foaming at intervals over its rocky bed as if it were still startled by the denizens of the rocky mountains, and then subsiding into clear lakes and rivulets, spanned by fairy bridges embosomed in flowering shrubs, and pausing beside reclusive hermitages and grotts where no spirit less ethereal than a summer fairy makes resort, in the form of a bird or a butterfly.

## CHAPTER VII.

Tremadoc.—Pont Aber Glas Llyn.—Beddgelert.—The Hotel.—The Greyhound.—The Legend.—Mael Hebeg.—Chair of Rhys Goch.—Llyn Cwellyn.—Cidwm.—Helena.—Croes Awr.—Llyn Dinas.—Cwm Llan.—Llyn Gwynant.—Cwm Dyli.—Llydaw.—Pen-y-Gwyrhyd.—Bardsey.—Bodvaen.—The grave of Vortegern.—The Brethren.—The Leopard Rock.—The Story of Nest.—The Wicked Owain.—The Attack.—The Sanctuary.—The Meeting of the Rivals.—Clynog.—St. Beuno's Mark.—Imprecations.—Ignorance.



OUR excursion to Beddgelert was made from Glynlifton, taking the line of country between it and Tremadoc, and returning by Caernarvon. The road is fine, and the country cheerful and extensive without any very remarkable features, till the beautifully situated sea-port of Tremadoc is reached, which is perhaps as striking as any in North Wales, both from its position and the circumstance of its existing at all; for it is situated on Penmorfa marsh, a wide tract of nearly two thousand acres, which the perseverance of an individual has rescued from the incursions of the sea. This benefactor to his country, whose fortune was not equal to his mind, and who consequently suffered for his devotion to utility, was the

late Alexander Maddocks, whose name the place he formed retains. An embankment to keep off the ravages of the sea from this part of the country, was long projected, and as far back as 1625 was proposed to Sir Hugh Middleton by Sir John Wynne, but the expense was found too enormous for it to be then attempted; more than a hundred thousand pounds have been expended to produce the magnificent embankment which now extends in singular majesty across the mouth of the Traeth Mawr, at the extremity of Cardigan Bay for nearly a mile, joining the counties of Caernarvon and Merioneth.

The pretty inn whose front is covered with jessamine and passion-flowers, where we rested for a few hours, is placed at the foot of a nearly perpendicular rock at the entrance of the town, having all the most ornamental portion of it in view. The church with its lofty spire, the handsome buildings of the market-house, and a fine column which seems to occupy the place where a cross would in former times have been built, are good objects from the windows, and the small garden behind has a very splendid enclosure, for the flat surface of the rock rises to an immense height immediately from that spot.

From the centre of the embankment the view of the circling mountains is glorious. It appears to me that Snowdon is seen from hence to the greatest advantage, towering above a host of lesser but still majestic hills, whose summits peer one over the other, as if they strove to gaze

upon the sea, their neighbour, now driven back from their bases by the daring hand of man.

The whole eight miles from Tremadoc to Aber Glas Llyn is magnificent in the extreme; the nearer rocks becoming more and more wild, and the distant mountains more and more beautiful in their outlines and positions. One in the form of an acutely pointed pyramid is the chief ornament of a scene where all is exquisite, combining grandeur with beauty in the most attractive manner.



The fine stream of the Glas Llyn runs glittering below the road, now spreading wide between its lovely banks, now contracting, with numerous falls, into a narrow bed. The banks are clothed with rich woods, and the fantastic rocks rise from their concealments in all directions, sometimes hanging in terrific masses over the road, or soaring up into the blue

sky almost beyond the reach of view. At length the route changes, and a woody hill of great beauty is ascended, beyond which the river, grown more noisy and turbulent, appears to have lost all controul, and comes foaming and dashing over piles of rocks beneath a small bridge, the celebrated Pont Aber Glas Llyn.

Nothing can be conceived more romantic or admirable than





this spot: the nearly meeting rocks stoop forward towards each other; and there, forty feet above the river, hangs in air, apparently just touching the two mountains, a one-arched bridge clothed with a robe of ivy, whose festoons wave to and fro as if the action of her leap had disturbed the drapery of some nymph whose form had hardened into stone as she performed the wondrous feat. Below, beyond, around, the waters rave, and foam, and rush, and here, for the first time, I recognised the beautiful colour familiar to my eye in the Pyrenees, and which has given the name of the Blue Pool to this lovely spot.

In the days when the vale of Beddgelert was the abode of Llywelyn, during his hunting excursions, or when the little village with its bridge and secluded church were only visited by occasional travellers who came to that spot after wandering amongst the unfrequented mountains, then indeed this charming spot must have offered beauties of no common character. In the days too, when the beautiful and pathetic ballad of William Spencer was read with a thorough belief in the truth of the tradition it records, and youths, and maidens, and sympathising parents visited the tomb of the faithful greyhound, and 'join'd their heads' and their tears over the rugged stone which marks his fall—then indeed Beddgelert must have been a scene of solitary beauty full of romantic interest. The never-changing mountains are still there; their summits rising in solemn majesty to the skies—the enamelled fields still stretch along the deep glen where

three vales meet, the few cottages, the church, the bridge over the bright Colwyn are even yet to be found, but the charm of the spot is no more. A huge hotel of the commonest form, such as might have been transplanted from the suburbs of London—as large, as unsightly, and almost as noisy and bustling—now fills up a wide space where once a humble village



inn stood, offering merely “rest and a guide, and food and fire.” Carriages of all sorts, horses and lounging attendants, smokers of cigars and stable-boys, now occupy the area in front of the hotel; the stage-coach comes dashing over the bridge, startling the sylvan nymphs with a horn—how unlike that which summoned poor Gelert to his master, and roused the wolf or stag in their retreats! It is true that this is one of the best and most popular houses of accommodation for travellers in



the Principality, the most resorted to, and the most talked of; but it must appear nevertheless, to the lover of Nature, out of place, entirely destructive of romance, and the most annoying of comforts that was ever met with; and when I arrived, with a very large party, to pass the day in that seclusion, I could scarcely turn my eyes towards the surrounding scenery, so surprised was I to find how strangely the hand of man had deformed Nature. Every room in the immense establishment was occupied—dimmers were being prepared, waiters and chamber-maids jostling each other in the passages, and bustle and confusion at the height—while the civil landlady was in despair at being unable to place us in agreeable rooms.

We took refuge awhile in the little garden, worthy in its arrangement of the immediate vicinity of London; and quitting its walks, we gave ourselves up to the guide, who led us across a few fields to a spot enclosed by iron rails, and planted with meagre shrubs; in the midst of which are two grey stones. This is shown as the grave of Gelert, the famous hound of Llywelyn, and here leaves are plucked by curious visitors, in memory of the legend so frequently repeated.

King John had given to Llywelyn the Great, not only his daughter Joanna in marriage, but as a prize little inferior, a fine greyhound, of superior breed and great beauty, who was wont to take the lead in all his expeditions, and to bring down the game in gallant style. The usual season of the chase

arrived, and the prince, his wife, and children had repaired to the hunting-ground in this valley : one day Llywelyn set forth, and had not gone far when he discovered that Gelert, his favourite hound, had lagged behind ; he called him in vain, and, out of temper and impatient, he continued his way, and occupied himself in his sport, still, however, dwelling with vexation on the absence of his constant companion. On his return, as he was about to enter his dwelling, he was met by Gelert, who leaped upon him and showed every demonstration of delight. The prince angrily drove him off, and, as he did so, remarked that the jaws of the dog were covered with blood, that blood was on the floor and on the walls—a strange foreboding of evil stole over his mind : his infant son had been left in the cradle—no attendant was near—he tracked the crimson stairs—they led him to the spot where his child reposed—the cradle was overturned, the infant gone, and a pool of blood was at his feet.

Llywelyn allowed himself not a moment's time for reflection—Gelert was fawning beside the couch of his murdered child—his fangs were red with gore—he could not doubt but that the wretched animal had torn the sleeping babe, and drawing<sup>t</sup> his sword, he plunged it into the body of the hound. At that instant he heard a cry—he darted forward, removed the confused heap before him, and, struggling beneath, he beheld his child uninjured, his tiny hands resting on the body of a gaunt wolf, which had been killed by Gelert in his defence.

What was now left for Llywelyn but remorse and late repentance?—he erected a tomb over the remains of the faithful dog, and the spot is called “The Grave of Geiert” to this day.

There is a Welsh adage which alludes to this legend, “he repents as much as the man who killed the dog”—and this would naturally lead one to imagine that the sad tale were indeed true; nevertheless, the same is told in many places, and seems originally to have come from the far East, where almost all beautiful stories had their birth.

It is said to be engraven on a rock in Limerick; it is told in an old English romance; it is repeated in France; and it is the subject of a Persian drama!

Perhaps the summary vengeance taken by Llywelyn on his supposed rival, De Breos, may have given rise to the tradition; and his discovery of the injustice of his act might have caused his remorse, and the erection of a stone or a chapel in the Monastery of Augustines, which once stood, probably, where now the comfortable inn *deforms* the solitude. It is known that Llywelyn bestowed large gifts on this convent, which is said to have been the oldest in Britain except that at Bardsey. It was dedicated to the Virgin, and both male and female devotees passed their lives in prayer at her shrine: all that remains of this once extensive and magnificent retreat of piety is a field near the church still called Dôl y Lleian—The Nun’s Meadow.

Moel Hebog, the Hill of the Hawk, rises boldly from the vale—and mountains, some clothed with wood, others barren

and rugged, crowd round their chief, closing it in on all sides: there is a cavern shown as the hiding-place of Owen Glendwr; but he is a Welsh hero who does not excite my sympathy, for he only just escapes the imputation of cowardice; and his prudence and selfishness are more apparent than his gallantry. The fine oak still standing near Shrewsbury, from whose branches he securely beheld the fatal encounter of his brave ally Hotspur and the English force—is a record of his care for his own safety, and his indifference to his friends, which effectually checks the interest he might otherwise inspire.

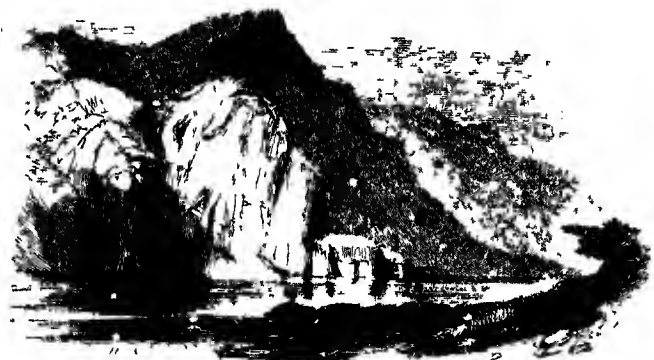
A singular hollowed stone above the river, is called, “The Chair of RhÛs Goch,” and is supposed to have been the favourite seat of a mountain bard of the fifteenth century, whose fame is handed down to posterity; though, like most of the Welsh poets with whose compositions we are acquainted, his reputation seems somewhat higher than his deserts. The themes chosen by these native bards are often simple and rustic in the extreme; and it is rather difficult to feel enthusiasm in strains which *satirize* a felon fox, the stealer of a favourite peacock—a poem by RhÛs Goch—often cited, although, perhaps, the poem was understood at the time as alluding to some known event. He is, however, said to have excited his countrymen to assert their freedom, and to have been held in fear by the English oppressors, by whom “the minstrels, bards and rhymers who infested the territories of Snowdon” were proscribed. RhÛs Goch not only sung

war-songs, but had fought for his country, having joined Owen Glendwr's party. On his defeat, the bard fled from mountain to mountain, pursued by the English, and at last found shelter at Beddgelert—and a grave.

It is to be regretted that so few of his poems are extant, as no judgment can be formed of the tenderness as well as of the humour attributed to him.

We remained many hours at Beddgelert, but were unable to wander far along the valley, for dark clouds gathered over the hills, the air became oppressively heavy, and there was every appearance of a coming storm; a circumstance which almost every traveller has to record in this spot. At length, the expected rain came down violently, and continued, without intermission the greatest part of the afternoon. We had twenty miles to return to Glynlifton in the evening, and the moonlight, which we had hoped would accompany us, was shrouded by the thick mist which hung over the mountains. However, we set forth with good courage, and our party being full of spirit, and ready to observe and remark on everything we saw or did *not* see, the long but rapid journey was very agreeably performed; occasional flashes of the moon permitting us to notice several remarkable objects in our way. We afterwards on quitting that part of Wales for another, re-passed the road and saw the scenery by the light of day: it is inferior to that from Tremadoc, though there are some fine features and some curious legends attached to the mountains.

The gigantic Mynydd Mawr here frowns over Llyn Cwellyn, a small gloomy lake well known to fishers for its char, and shelves down towards its waters, showing its bleak and barren sides and rugged front. Inaccessible as this mountain appears, on its highest point was once a fortress inhabited by a robber chief, who was the scourge of the surrounding country, and who used to descend upon travellers, and plunder and murder all whom he attacked. The brother of Constantine the Great was passing, at the head of



his troops along this rocky gorge on his way to meet his mother Helena when this marauder, whom tradition names Cidwm, slew the young prince with an arrow. One of the soldiers was immediately sent forward with the disastrous tidings to the unfortunate mother, whom he met in one of the deep recesses leading to Tan-y-bwlch. She advanced joyously to meet him, thinking that her son was just at hand,







out on hearing the lamentable truth wrung her hands in anguish and exclaimed, "Croes awr imi!" "Oh adverse hour for me!"—whoever inquires the name of the spot in which the sad news reached the bereaved Helena, will be told that that part of the valley is to this day called "Croes Awr."

In the immediate neighbourhood of Dinas Emrys is the fine sheet of water called Llyn Dinas, the Pool of the Fort, which takes its name from Merlin's Castle. It is surrounded by gigantic mountains, and has all the solemn grandeur of its brother lakes. Close by is a small still valley, all verdure and beauty, strangely contrasted with the solemn rocks which hem it in. Here Snowdon towers above the deep gorge of Cwm Llan and not far off the beautiful Lake of Llyn Gwynnant in its enchanting valley reappears, to the wanderer who, in the circle of Capel Curig, Beddgelert, Llanrwst and Llanberis may roam, as in a charmed round, every day discovering new wonders and new beauties which perchance he had missed on his first visit, or had not sufficiently dwelt upon.

Here the valley is called Cwm Dyli and here the stream of Llyn Llydaw sends its cataract, called Rhaiadr Cwm Dyli, for more than two hundred and fifty feet down the rocks of the mountain of Llydaw, all precipices and abysses till the top of the ascent, or Pen y Gwrhyd, is reached, where, looking downwards, the awful Pass of Llanberis presents itself to the bewildered view.

Our next excursion was to a seat of Lord Newborough's

called Bodvean situated towards the south of the peninsula of Caernarvonshire, at the foot of a fine heath-covered hill from whence a magnificent view is gained of the country round. The wide extent of Cardigan Bay spreads out on one hand, and that of Caernarvon on the opposite. On the first the two fine castles of Cricceath and Harlech are distinctly visible, as they stand, like two giants, guarding the great Traeth of Tremadoc, while on the other side the small town of Nevin lies in the flat below, where Edward the First held his great tournament in honour of the conquest of Wales. Beyond, as if within a stone's throw is Porthdinlleyn, the safe-looking little port, the threatened rival of Holyhead, which only a few months since had nearly obtained the advantage by the direction of a railroad to its harbour in preference to the proposal of carrying another bridge over the Menai.

In the far distance we caught a view of Bardsey, the Island of Saints, and, though the mysterious Valley of Vortigern lay concealed by its surrounding mountains, we could trace its windings from our elevated position. This valley was the last retreat of the ill-starred British prince who lost his country for love of a false woman ; and here, after he found the spells of Merlin unequal to preserve him in the fastnesses of Snowdon, he fenced himself round with enchantments still more potent amongst the black precipices of Yr Eifl, and hoped to shut out his foes and escape from the stings of conscience. But his castle, which overhung the horrid rock

called Craig-y-Llam was destroyed in one night by lightning, and it was reported that the earth opened and swallowed up the truster in magic spells ; nevertheless there is a spot shown near, which is called Bedd Gwrtheyrn or his grave, for Gwrtheyrn or Gwytheyrn Gwrthenau was the name he bore amongst his people, and beneath the earth there was found a stone coffin containing gigantic bones supposed to be the remains of the unhappy king who governed the Britons in the first century.\*

Bardsey, or the Island of the Current, was formerly called the Island of Saints, and enjoyed a reputation superior to any other spot in the known world, for *all* its inhabitants were holy. On the massacre of the monks of Bangor Iscoed, in Flintshire, nine hundred persecuted men fled across Wales

\* Amongst the British Triads, those curious fragments of ancient wisdom and superstition mingled, is to be found the following, under the head of the Three Closures and Disclosures of the Isle of Britain :—

1st. The head of Bran, the Blessed, the son of Lyr, hidden in the White Hill in London : while it was kept concealed no harm would befall the country, but King Arthur disclosed it out of pride, resolving that his power alone should defend his kingdom.

2nd. The bones of Gwrthlyr, the Blessed, which were dispersed and buried in the different parts of the country, but Vortigern, out of love to Rowena, revealed them, and thus ruined the kingdom.

3rd. The Dragons hidden by Lludd, son of Beli, in the fortress of Phariön in the rocks of Eryri, but disclosed by Vortigern out of revenge towards his subjects who hated him for having introduced the Saxons.

These Triads are the most remarkable portion of Welsh literature : they usually contain allegorical prophecies : in the Mabinogion the same are repeated and the histories enlarged on.

seeking shelter from their cruel enemies, and found it in this place, where already a large assembly of holy men had established themselves and passed their lives in prayer and praise ; this arrival raised their numbers to twenty thousand, all of whom in due time found graves there.

The superior of this holy fraternity was Dubricius, Archbishop of Caerlleon, who resigned his see of St. David's, and founded a monastery here, where, in 612, he died : he was soon after succeeded by Lleudad, a man of such extraordinary piety, that he dared to ask any favour of Heaven, certain of its being granted. In consideration of the exemplary lives of the first members of this convent, he intreated that their deaths might be regulated by seniority, that like grapes in the vintage, the ripest might first be cut down ; this singular request was granted, and the brethren died one after another, always at a very advanced age. This privilege continued for many years ; at length, strange to say, the Saints forgot their characters, and, too secure in their sanctity, fell like other mortals, and being found no better than the rest of men, the miracle, which had so long distinguished them, ceased altogether. A wild race of fishers now occupy the place of the Saints of Bardsey.

Aberdaron, a small fishing town on the opposite coast, is the spot from whence pilgrims, for centuries, embarked on their way to pay their vows at the graves of the twenty thousand Saints. Above the sea rises a yellow streaked rock, whose form and colour give it at a distance an appear-

ance not unlike that of a leopard, and it was beneath this grim projection that rose the chapel of Our Lady, and yawned the cave of St. Mary, celebrated for its wondrous properties of granting the wishes of the devout. To obtain the full benefit of the miracle, the devotee must descend the Leopard Rock by a path almost perpendicular down the precipice, and returning, bring back a mouthful of water to the top.

Aberdaron Church, dedicated to a St. Hyrwyn, one of the Saints of Bardsey, formerly afforded the privilege of sanctuary; and it was here that Griffith, the son of the great Rhys ap Tudor, of South Wales, fled for security in his extreme danger.

Griffith is a great hero of Wales, and his fate and that of all his family is a melancholy one. But the story of his beautiful sister Nesta of whom he was extremely fond, is peculiarly sad. After the death of Rhys Mawr, her father, Henry the First beheld and loved her, and little regarding his own honour or her birth, took her as his prize, and she became the mother of the celebrated Robert of Gloucester, so called from the place of his birth. The tyrannical lover then insisted on her becoming the wife of Gerald of Windsor, constable of Pembroke Castle, who made her a kind husband, and estimated her virtues as they deserved. King Henry in order that the claims of her brother Griffith might not interfere with his ambitious designs, had sent him to Ireland, where he hoped to keep him in a sort of honourable captivity. But Griffith, more from affection to his sister Nesta,

than, at first, with a view to the regaining of his rights, contrived to elude his guards and escape to Wales.

Meantime, a sad calamity<sup>1</sup> had overtaken the beautiful Nesta. There was a young prince of the country, son of a worthy father, but who was himself profligate and daring, and resolute in evil.

“’Twas at a feast, accursed the mansion where !”

that, amongst other topics, the transcendant beauty of Nesta, the daughter of Rhys Mawr, was talked of, and she was allowed to be the most lovely woman that Wales had ever produced.

Owain, the son of Cadogan, listened to her praises, as he sat at his father’s board ; and, excited by the description of her attractions, took the wicked, and cruel resolution of obtaining this paragon of ladies for his own. He made a proposition to several of his wild and dissolute companions to aid him in an attack on Pembroke Castle. As he was a connexion by birth of the fair victim, he thought he should easily obtain admission to her presence ; and, having once entered the castle, he conceived it easy to introduce his band.

His stratagem succeeded : he was announced to the lady as one of her relations, who had come to pay her his respects, and was admitted. The sight of her extreme beauty at once determined him as to her fate. He had scarcely left her presence than he gave the signal, and the castle of Pembroke was in flames in several quarters. Nesta flew to the apartments of her husband, and urged his imme-

diate flight, as she conceived his capture alone to be the object of the attack. She even, it is said, with her own hands, pulled up the boards of a small closet, from whence a way offered of escape. Gerald, trusting that his wife and children would be safe, and having no means of defence, complied with her intreaties, and departed.

The next moment the ruffians entered; and it was then that the unhappy Nesta found that she was herself the cause of the outrage. She was seized and carried off, together with her children, to the castle of the unworthy Owain. Shortly after Gerald of Windsor received his children back, but his lovely wife was retained by the marauder in spite of his intreaties, threats, and despair.

Prince Griffith, on his arrival in Wales, found all the desolation that had taken place: he had no home, he knew not who were his friends, his life was in danger, he was a fugitive, and an outcast, and he fled from place to place desolate and dispirited. The wrongs of his beloved sister he resolved, if possible, to avenge, but where was he to turn? His uncle Cynan, Prince of North Wales, had betrayed him, and he discovered that that false relative had agreed with King Henry to secure and imprison him.

Hunted from glen to glen, the unfortunate prince found himself at length at Aberdaron, and one day, when the monks were at prayer at the altar of the Saint, he rushed among them, and clinging to the shrine, claimed sanctuary from his pursuers.

This was instantly granted; but scarcely had he been placed in security, when the armed followers of Cynan, headed by the wicked Owain, the abductor of the fair Nesta came thundering at the gates, demanding their prey. The monks held firm, and resisted this attack upon their privileges—they contrived the escape of Griffith, and had him safely conducted to the wilds of Ustrad-Towi; they gave notice of his position to such of his friends as were willing to assist him, and in a short time the young prince found himself in the command of a large party of followers. He defended himself in the fastnesses for a space, and finding his strength sufficient, made occasional attacks on the English. King Henry, who appears to have been utterly callous to every suggestion of humanity on this occasion, now engaged Owain to undertake the task of ridding him of his enemy by assassination; and, with that view, the treacherous knight set forth on a secret expedition into the valley of Ustrad-Towi, in hopes to set upon the unsuspecting Griffith. In the mean time, the king had given the command of troops to the Constable of Pembroke, in whose quarrel he refused to interfere, and ordered him to attack Prince Griffith in his retreat.

Gerald of Windsor had not long entered the valley on his unwelcome errand, when he saw before him another party; and his fury and hatred were wound up nearly to frenzy, on discovering that Owain, the son of Cadogan, was within his reach. He allowed no pause to his resolve, but giving the



signal to his soldiers, he rushed forward, and a fierce contest ensued. Owain, fought desperately, for valour was his only worthy attribute; but an arrow from the bow of the Constable revenged the wrongs of his ill-fitted wife, and Owain fell to the ground pierced through the heart.

Prince Griffith, warned in time, was able to elude his pursuers, and his career was not ended till after many years of strife and toil.

In the grounds of Bodvean, in a deep dell, rises a singular rock, which has somewhat puzzled geologists, for it is filled with sea-shells of a character unlike those ordinarily discovered in similar positions. It extends to some distance, and has a remarkable appearance—forming itself into caves, amongst the luxuriant trees around it. The house itself is in a most secluded spot, well suited to study and retirement, embowered in woods, and shut out from all intrusion; surrounded with beautiful and romantic walks; and close to the magnificent hill from whence the view I have described is visible.

On our way to Bodvean, we passed through the seaport of Pwllheli—or the Salt Water Pit—remarkable only for the splendid views from its neighbourhood of the Snowdon range, and the mountains of Merionethshire and Cardigan—but Clynnog, a little village at which we paused for a short time, has much in it to interest the traveller, who has visited the Well, and heard of the miracles of St. Winefred; for here once stood the Convent, founded by her uncle of famous

memory, the great St. Beuno, and here still stands his church, the finest in North Wales, and the chest in which offerings at his shrine used formerly to be placed.

It seems that in 616, not long after the death of the great founder of the convent in the Isle of Saints, St. Beuno took the monastic habit, and established a fraternity at Clynnog. Cadvan was then King of North Wales, and had promised a great deal of land; but dying before it had been given, his son, Cadwallon, executed his desire, and received in return from the Saint a golden sceptre, *worth forty cows*; the land, however, which he had given proved to be the inheritance of an infant, whose claim could not be set aside. The saint represented to the king that the land must be restored to the right owner, and other ground bestowed on him; but Cadwallon obstinately and irreverently refused to do either. On this the saint rose up, and quitting the spot, left his curse with the unjust king; he had not however proceeded far, when he was overtaken by a cousin of the monarch, called Gwrdeint, who intreated him to be appeased, and presented to him the town of Clynnog, to belong to God and him for ever, for his soul's sake, and that of his wicked cousin.

The convent had many advantages and privileges; amongst others it had a claim to all calves and lambs, which were born with a particular spot in the ear, called the mark of St. Beuno; and for a length of time the Carmelites, who were established at Clynnog, kept up the custom. On

Trinity Sunday, the anniversary of the saint, these animals were brought to the convent, and redeemed for a sum which was placed in a great oaken chest. This was not discontinued in Protestant times, for till lately the churchwardens were accustomed to sell, and account for the value of the beasts, and still Cyff Beuno received the money they brought. The chest is made of a solid piece of oak, secured with three locks, and thought so strong as to have originated a proverb,

“ You may as well try to break St. Benno’s chest.”

A curious old manuscript called “ The Life of St. Beuno,” which was missing many years, from 1594, when it was seen, is said to have been found a short time back by Dr. Thomas Williams of Trevriew.

The church is very beautiful, a fact rare in Wales ; and it is situated well amongst trees, from which the enormous tower rises finely, commanding the country round. There are remains of a good deal of excellent carving of stone and wooden seats, and the forms of the windows are very graceful.

The chapel of St. Beuno communicates with the church by a long dark passage ; his tomb and the effigy of St. Winifred which once adorned it have disappeared, but the oaken chest is still to be seen, probably now used as a poor’s box. It is to be hoped that long since it has ceased to be made the receptacle of *cursing money* ; but in Catholic times this church was famous for a ceremony, which could scarcely be construed into anything pious, even by the priests who allowed their store to be increased by its means.

Formerly, if a person conceived himself injured by another, he repaired to the shrine of St. Beuno, who, saint as he was, had himself indulged in curses in the case of Cadwallon: and here the angry man knelt bare knee'd in the church and offered a piece of money to the saint, uttering, as he did so, the most horrible imprecations on the offender and his wife for generations. This was called "offering his enemy." Several other churches and saints were honoured in this manner, particularly St. Elian, whose shrine was in Anglesea. Occasionally, perhaps in the event of some priest more conscientious than his brethren forbidding this rite, the complainant would seek the well, called St. Beuno's, close by the church, and dropping his offering into the waters, would utter his spell there. This well possessed the power of healing, like that of Winefred, but has long ago ceased to be useful to the sick, who repaired to it. Perhaps so many curses took effect at last on its purity.

There is a Cromlech on the shore, not far from the village of Clynnog, where, in still earlier times, even worse superstitions were probably encouraged, so charmed are the ignorant with that which degrades them: well may the old British sage, Catwg, exclaim "If ignorance were to see how ugly he is, he would envy the beauty of the toad."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Tan y Bwlch.—Vale of Ffestiniog.—Waterfalls.—The False Guide.—The Welsh Whitewash.—Caen Coed.—The Storm.—Hugh Lloyd's Pulpit.—Flummery and Milk.—The Recognition.—Magical Staff.—Harlech Castle.—The Luminous Bowl.—Water Sprite.—Banks of the River Mawddach to Dolgelley.



WE took our leave of Caernarvon and its agreeable neighbourhood, our next proposed resting-place being Tan y Bwlch. We travelled by the mail, and had thus another opportunity of seeing the country of Beddgelert and Tremadoc, as a longer route is chosen for the convenience of delivering the letters. We were not sorry for this, as that lovely scenery cannot be seen too often; but when we arrived at the peaceful and beautiful valley in which the pretty inn called Caen Coed is situated, it appeared as if we had now reached the fairest spot in all North Wales. We stopped at the hotel, which is no disfigurement to the vale, like that at Beddgelert, for all is neat and graceful in the appearance of the building: it stands at a little distance from the village of Maentwrog which, though picturesque afar, is a wretched place,

ill-built, and slovenly. It took its name from a large stone which still lies in the churchyard, and is said to have been erected to the memory of a British saint in the seventh century, though it is probably a Druidical relic.

Tan y Bwlch signifies Below the Pass : the place is on the brow of a hill, overlooking the Vale of Ffestiniog, one of the most celebrated of those which the mountains of Snowdon enclose. The most conspicuous object on arriving is a charming-house, apparently in the woods, about half-way up a mountain, and having the command of the whole valley. This is a seat of Mrs. Oakley, and she certainly has reason to congratulate herself on possessing the most delightful residence to be found throughout the Principality. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the view from the wide terrace of the house ; and every part of the grounds which are liberally left open to the public, is arranged with exquisite taste. We saw the scene first by a fine sun-set, and it appeared to us impossible that anything could surpass the loveliness of the scenery we gazed upon. The silver river Dwyryd runs winding and doubling through the richest meadows—the space is wide and open, and the mountain range of Merionethshire does not close in too suddenly ; woods rise above woods, the whole glen seems a garden, and, far as the eye can reach, the sparkling sea is seen, with Harlech Castle on its rock, as a guard to the far-spreading Traeth whose fairest features alone are distinguished. The trees here seemed higher and more luxuri-







ant than is usual in Wales, and the whole aspect of the country gave an idea of greater richness and a more flourishing growth.

There are two waterfalls within a walk of Maentwrog, both fine when the season allows them sufficient water; but it is generally worth while to take the walk which has a fall for its object, as it rarely happens that the scenery does not repay you. Hitherto we had not seen, in any instance, a specimen of Welsh character which led us to believe the assertion, that the people are artful and deceitful; but it was left to a pretty innocent-looking boy whom we took as our guide, to prove that such traits exist. As he found we were disposed to linger for some time in the wood of the Rhaiaidr Du, he invented an excuse, which we readily admitted, and, after securing his gratuity, left us to join, as he told us, a carpenter who was busy making a new gate which we had passed: the man having as he informed us, with rather a piteous look, requested him, in Welsh, to go back and assist him, while we remained at the water-fall. On our return we saw the hero of his tale indeed, and had some conversation with him, but, our young traitor of the smooth tongue had taken good care not only to avoid partaking of his toil, but had gone merrily back to Maentwrog, to lie in wait for others who would, no doubt, select him, as we had done, from his fellows, for the frankness and simplicity of his countenance. The Welsh peasants have the

reputation, amongst the better order, of being singularly false and never speaking their minds, concealing under an air of extreme candour great art and remarkable selfishness. If this be true, they are worthy descendants of their countrymen of old, who betrayed their chiefs, and those chiefs each other, upon all occasions when, to be true, would have been dangerous to their own interests. This solitary instance of falsehood is, however, all that gave me reason to mistrust the people, and assuredly their civility and apparent readiness to oblige are infinitely more to be remarked.

There is no attachment between landlord and tenant existing amongst the Welsh, no respect or love towards the owner of the soil—that feeling is, long since, worn out, and its absence is very striking in parts of the country where profuse liberality has injured a once magnificent estate. No recollection of former benefits causes a tender indulgence towards the present, comparatively impoverished landlord, and no kind feeling betrays itself in his defence, if harshly named. In England, even now, this is not the case in the country, and it must be allowed, that the generous and grateful regard generally shown towards the head of an old family, in his own neighbourhood, is most agreeable to witness: in spite of democrats and designers, the English, it is to be hoped, still keep their noble character of independence and affectionate attachment to those who employ them: but in Wales the hosts of dis-

senting preachers to whom they willingly listen, and who teach them to despise all who are above them, and are supposed not to be as godly as themselves, added to the numerous Chartist publications published in Welsh, eagerly devoured by the ignorant population, have subverted all good, and left the people alive to gain alone. They are, however, in regard to strangers, strictly honest, exceedingly civil, and attentive, and rarely give occasion for complaint. This we found throughout our journey, though we seldom heard any praises bestowed on them by their countrymen. In the wildest parts of the mountains the people are said to be very dirty and slovenly, sullen, and unwilling to oblige; but as they speak only Welsh, and few travellers give themselves the trouble to learn their language, the supposed incivility complained of may arise from other causes. In the towns and villages carelessness is sufficiently apparent if not actual want of cleanly habits; the streets are always infested with pigs, and a dung-heap is generally exhibited at the door, as unseemly as in any French town: but no one can accuse the Welsh of neglecting the outward appearance of their houses, for their devotion to whitewash is such, that, as I have before had occasion to remark, both walls and roof are often as white as the most profuse application of the brush could make them, to the entire destruction of the picturesque.

There is a charming walk before the inn at Caen Coed through pleasant meadows, to Maen Twrog; we followed

an inviting path which led us by pleasant, shady lanes, along the vale, till we emerged into the road leading to Ffestiniog, and crossed a pretty rustic bridge over the foaming, brawling river Dwyryd. We then began to ascend a steep hill, and still as we advanced, the scenery grew more and more imposing, mountain rising above mountain in inexpressible grandeur, and all the soft features of the vale changing into ruggedness and wild sublimity. While we were leaning over the low wall which defends the road, and admiring the vast extent of view, the wind which had begun to rise, freshened into a gale, and, almost magically, a thick mist arose, climbing up from below, and, stealing into all the ravines, sent up spiral wreaths to the very summits, changing the forms of the heights into grotesque shapes, and casting indistinct horrors on every object around; low growling thunder peeled amongst the hills—the wind became furious, the rain descended in torrents, and we found ourselves on the highest point of the mountain of Ffestiniog still at a distance from the village, exposed to all the fury of the storm. For a time we tried to find shelter beneath a rocky bank, then under a few meagre bushes, hoping that the angry elements would be soon appeased: but the rain and wind increased, and we concluded that our best plan was to brave it, and try to find hospitality at the nearest house. Drenched with wet, and buffeted by the raging blast, we at length arrived at a neat school-house,

where we clamoured for admission, and were presently standing before a fine blazing peat fire, with all the inhabitants of the little dwelling busy in our service. As there was no attempting to quit our new snug position for some time, we willingly placed ourselves by the warm hearth, and accepted the civil hostess's invitation to eat some of the oaten cakes which she was in the act of making and toasting: she produced some milk and gave all with a hearty welcome. Her cottage was very clean and neat, and she informed us that her husband was the master of the national school of Ffestiniog. Provided with umbrellas we left her hospitable roof and proceeded to the village, whose name, appropriately enough to our adventure, means The Place of Hastening, where our resource was to order a chaise to return to Maen Twrog. But scarcely had we set forth, on this second expedition, than once more the storm came furiously on, and with infinite difficulty and as wet as ever, we succeeded in reaching the inn, a young girl, having, regardless of the pitiless weather darted out of a house at which we inquired the way, and run bonnetless before to show us the place we sought.

Here the same process of drying was gone through, and the bustling hostess had already ordered out her *phaeton* for our accommodation, when some half-drowned travellers in a post chaise drove furiously up to the door. They had arrived from our hotel, at Caen Coed, and the postilion had been charged by his mistress to inquire at Ffestiniog

if we were to be found, with orders to bring us back in case of our escape from the perils of the storm. This is one of many instances of the gratuitous attentions of the innkeepers in Wales.

We were in consequence of this adventure prevented pursuing our way to the celebrated falls of the Cynfael, which have great reputation in the country, nor could we make acquaintance with the strange rock which stands in



the bed of the river, and is called Hugh Lloyd's Pulpit. There is a legend attached to this stone, which adds to the interest of its picturesque appearance. In the reign of Charles the First there lived at Ffestiniog a young man, named Hugh Lloyd, who was happy in a wife whom he loved, and who spent some of his early peaceful years in this beautiful vale, but his happiness was suddenly destroyed by the death of

the partner of his simple enjoyments, and he found himself a lonely and a wretched man. The country was torn with civil commotions—the strife and action suited the gloomy temper of his soul, and he left his native village to take up arms on the popular side. For many years he followed the strange fortunes of war, and as he was brave and reckless,

he distinguished himself on several occasions, and from a poor man found himself possessed of very considerable property. The restoration of the second Charles, who was

“Not worth the coil was made for him,”

deprived him of his occupation, and with his raven locks turned to grey, and his smooth cheek wrinkled and scarred, he turned once more towards the spot which gave him birth.

It was a bright summer evening in autumn when Hugh Lloyd climbed the steep hill from Maen Twrog and gazed on the giant mountains, whose huge heads glowed with the golden rays of the setting sun, the changing leaves of the thick woods waving in the fresh breeze, and the winding river hurrying along the rich meadows; he turned with a sigh from the view, reflecting sadly on the alteration he felt in himself, and the unchanged aspect of Nature. He entered the village, and in a few moments paused before a cottage which, dimly through his starting tears, he recognised as that which was once his own. A handsome woman, stout and healthy-looking, though no longer young, was busy at the door distributing to her husband and several fine tall boys messes of flummery and milk as they sat on the stone bench outside laughing and talking. They soon observed the weary stranger and invited him, with ready hospitality, to partake of their fare, which he joyfully did, and becoming quickly at his ease amongst them, began to tell stories of his warlike expe-

rience. At first he had replied to their civilities in English, but by degrees he resumed his native tongue, and, much to their surprise, as he sat down the empty porringer, he addressed them in extemporary verses to this effect:—

In sunny France they boast their wine,  
In Holland vaunt their butter fine,  
Of London's dainties great the fame,  
And ev'ry land some praise may claim,  
But milk and flummery—fair Cambria's boast,  
I hold the best and ever prize the most !

This effusion, like the Pennillion, which always excite delight and admiration when appositely composed and applied, was extremely successful. “You are, then, a native Welshman?” was the inquiry. “I am so, indeed,” returned the poet, “and it is many years since I had three kisses from the young girl who first sat on this bench.”

The ladle fell from the hand of the hostess as she was helping her guest to more of the food he loved. She gazed at the veteran with sparkling eyes, and clapping her hands together exclaimed, “You can be no other, then, than Hugh Lloyd, whose hands made this seat for my sister, and to whom I, then a child, gave three kisses for permission to sit first upon it.”

Nothing could exceed the joy with which the old soldier was recognised and welcomed: there was no question about his means, he appeared poor and travel-worn, and they offered him a home for the rest of his days. He accepted it, but had

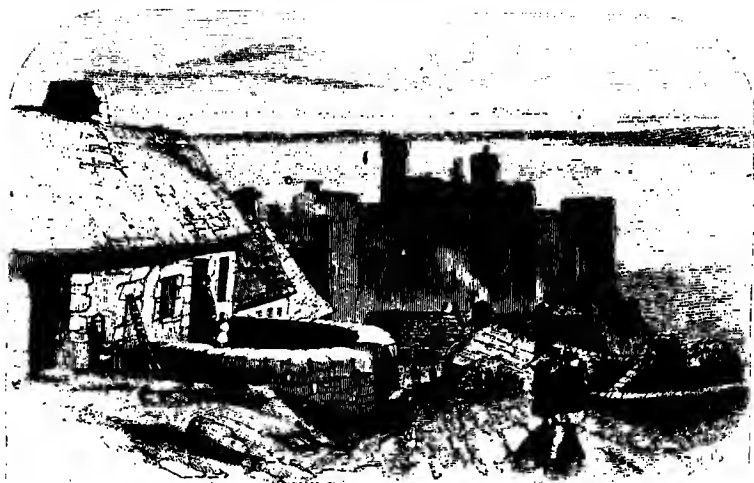


the satisfaction of telling them that he was a rich man and could in future support them all. He had acquired great knowledge and learning in his travels, and was looked upon as a sage, so much so that he became at length not only the admiration but in some cases the dread of his neighbourhood, for he was supposed to read in his books of hidden secrets and mysteries seldom revealed to mortal man. The belief of the country was that, as he was often seen to stroll by the banks of the stream, and to seat himself on the rocks near the cataracts of Cynfael, he there held converse with spirits and was taught by them strange lore. They imagined that in many a stormy night he was accustomed to take his seat on the particular stone which is called by his name, and from thence deliver his incantations. After his death, which happened at an advanced age, his spirit was supposed to haunt that spot, and his voice was heard amidst the roar of the waterfalls, accompanied by the wailings of the spirits under his control.

The magical staff of Hugli Lloyd was for many years preserved with care in the family of one of his descendants.

From Tan y Bwlell, whose pretty inn we quitted with regret, our route lay on the opposite side of the great marsh towards Harlech Castle, a fine old fortress originally built in the middle of the sixth century by a British prince, and on its ruins Edward, the First constructed the present, which was finished in the thirteenth century, and became the scene of many contentions between Owen Glendwr and the English:

it afforded a temporary asylum to the ill-fated Margaret of Anjou when she fled from her persecutors after the battle of



Northampton. It was the last of the castles in North Wales which held out for Charles the First, and it now stands, an imposing ruin, commanding one side of the Bay of Cardigan, while the other is defended by the Fortress of Criccaeth. For many miles along our road we beheld the bristling turrets of this fine monument of antique warfare darkly rising against the clear sky. The long extent of marshy vale before it is reached, is desolate and gloomy, and the approach to the open sea is a welcome sight. Along this extensive marsh in days previous to the erection of causeways, and before draining had improved the land, the fire spirits were accustomed to play strange gambols, poisoning the grass, setting

fire to hay and corn ricks, and injuring cattle: once, for eight months these marsh-fiends held uncontrolled sway, and ran up and down the Morfa Bychan, or Little Marsh, in the shape of blue lambent flames, sometimes sounding a horn, and at others firing off unearthly guns, to the infinite terror of the country. They had no power over men, but harmed domestic animals and all vegetable productions: but while these demons of the valley reigned it was very unpleasant travelling in their track, as many a farmer on his return to his home at Maen Twrog from Harlech found. It is related that one man was going back on a dark night on horseback, and suddenly, in the damp and gloomy way before him, he beheld 'a living thing in the form of a bowl,' rolling backwards and forwards close to his horse's feet. He had great difficulty in inducing the animal to advance, and what would have become of him is unknown had he not luckily remembered the power a paternoster has over those impish enemies. On uttering the prayer in a loud voice the bowl gave one luminous flash, a peal of laughter rent the air, and on looking back he saw the imp bounding with great leaps along the centre of Cwm Bychan, the Little Hollow, and there roll about amongst the circle of Druid-stones at the bottom of the valley.

There is scarcely a pass or a rock where, in monkish times, mysterious sounds were not heard, and the cries of souls in grief did not resound. Travellers at night often met with wonderful adventures, which now it would be in vain to seek, as the spirits are aware that the present style of tra-

velling is too rapid to give people time to attend to their complaints.

In other days, if a wayfarer happened to lean over the bridge or a torrent stream such as we passed on our way to Ffestiniog, he would have heard a weak voice cry, as if of one struggling in the river, "O Dduw! pa beth a wnaf?" "Oh God! what shall I do?" and if compassion induced him to go down the rocks and try to help the sufferer, he became the victim of the water sprite. . . .

The road from Harlech to Barmouth is rocky and picturesque, with the fine open sea close by and its broad sands.



Nothing can be more dreary and insignificant than the little towns, although Barmouth has become of late a great resort of sea-bathers; and many persons who fear to encounter the expenses of Aberystwith choose this somewhat desolate spot for the benefit of the advantages it can offer: there are, however, a few good houses. From hence the scenery becomes less wild and bare, and improves in beauty,

till, by the wooded banks of the charming river Mawddach, which for many miles feels the influence of the tide, all becomes luxuriant and pleasing. The hills come crowding forward, each offering some new attraction, till, on approaching Dolgelley, the fine outline of Cader Idris, one of the most striking of Welsh mountains, comes suddenly into view. The sail up the river from Barmouth to Dolgelley is equally agreeable as the journey by land, and it is difficult to decide as to which bank is to be preferred, both offering so much to admire. The town of Dolgelley shines out from the valley, a most alluring spot; with the fine river, the bridge, and the background of mountains and trees; all this at a distance is beautiful to behold, but wondrous is the change on a near approach.

## CHAPTER IX.

Dolgelley. — Plan of the Town. — The Grave with the Willow. — Torrent Walk. — Nannau. — The Spirit's Oak. — Howel Sele. — The Meeting in the Forest. — The Strange Knight. — The Revelation. — The Abbey of Kymmer. — Fall of the Oak. — Druid Gateway. — Old Customs. — Wedding Gifts. — Funerals. — Rustic Honours. — The Falls. — Ants' Nests. — The Precipice Walk. — The Lake. — Fairy Bread. — The Bride. — The Meddygon Myddvai.



DOLGELLEU, or Dolgelley, the Vale of the Hazel, is the chief town of Merionethshire; and, hearing that fact, the stranger is not a little astonished on crossing the bridge and driving into the rugged streets of a wretched village to find that he is arrived at his destination. We looked round us in amazement when we stepped forth from the large ugly inn, and found ourselves in this shabbiest of Welsh towns, where we could not conjecture how it was possible that assizes and markets of importance in the Principality could be held. Most of the towns in Wales are mean in the extreme, but Dolgelley certainly is the very Priam of British cities for ‘sovereign desolation.’

It had looked so bright and gay and pleasant a mile off and the situation is so exquisite, that we began to believe



ourselves under the influence of a spell, or just awaking from one, to find our fairy palaces changed into hovels: this had so often happened to us in France, that we were less excusable in having raised our expectations so highly. We were not, however, allowed long to look upon the little stone caves in this *hazel bower*, for the usual hospitality of the country was again extended to us, and we took up our abode during our stay at the seat of a gentleman in the vicinity. From thence we had many opportunities of visiting the charming spots with which this part of the country abounds. Not that a traveller is ill-accommodated, even in this ill-built and unprepossessing place, where very neat clean lodgings can be had, and where the inn is sufficiently commodious and good; but there is not a street in which a prospect of anything in the slightest degree alluring can be obtained, although the whole country round is a paradise. It is recorded that a

native of Dolgelley, on being asked to describe the town, threw a cork and a handful of nutshells on a table, and letting the one represent the church and the others the *plan* of the buildings, gave as good an idea as could possibly be conveyed of the style of architecture and form of the streets. The church is not old or picturesque either within or without; one monument alone of any interest remains hidden in a corner: it is of an early date, and has the effigy of a knight in full armour, bearing the inscription;—"Hic jacet Mauric, filius Ynyr Vychan." The family of Vaughan, or Vychan, were long the lords of this part of Wales, and are still the chief personages, although the death of the well-known Sir Robert Vaughan of Nannau Park has made a void in the society which can never be replaced.

There are no pews in the church, instead of which there are open benches, a custom which allows of a great deal of space: decorated coffin plates are hung in remarkable profusion over the pillars of the church, and convey an idea of the votive offerings to saints in Catholic places of worship; this is a usual practice here; the plates are taken from a coffin when a person is buried, and hung up there: this is, no doubt, a relic of some Catholic superstition, and it has a most singular effect.

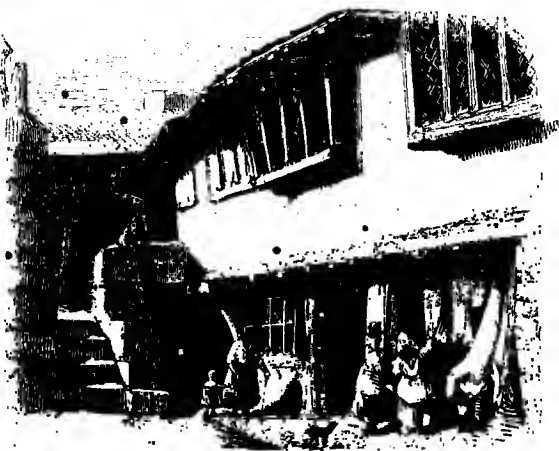
In a retired part of the churchyard is a grave shaded by a fine willow-tree; it has no stone, and is only known to have been the last abode of a lady who resided for fifteen years near Dolgelley: a gentleman who was her constant and



devoted companion, caused the willow to be planted on the grave, and, having attended to that last duty, disappeared from the neighbourhood and has never since revisited it. A mystery surrounded them which has never been developed; they seemed to live for each other, made no acquaintances, were never known to converse with any one of the town, the lady was always deeply veiled, and was always met attended by her friend. Nothing was known of them, and nothing is now likely to be. Their story is a perfect blank.

A few rugged stones, in a dirty corner, is all that remains of the parliament house where Owen Glendwr held meetings with his friends:

but, though probably many of the houses are built on the site of convents, nothing is left to indicate such an origin, or to redeem the town from ugliness, or render it a fitting abode for animals of a higher



species than the huge hogs which, as is usual in Welsh towns, make the streets their favourite resort.

Our first excursion in this neighborhood was to a beautiful glen called the Torrent Walk: the weather was unpropitious

for anything but a waterfall, but we braved the rain and a long damp road in order to arrive at this spot, which is one of the most remarkable and delightful scenes it is possible to visit. A magnificent torrent stream of considerable volume comes rushing and foaming down from a distant mountain, through a long extent of park scenery. We ascended the pretty path, which becomes more and more precipitous as you advance, for more than a mile, and watched the play of the impatient waters as they leaped and rushed over the huge masses of grey stone with which the bed of the torrent is thickly strewn; every here and there a rock, larger and higher than the others, obliges the stream to throw itself from a height, and it comes foaming down into a clear pool below, to resume its falls and rapid course, forming a thousand cataracts in its way. When we reached the highest point from whence the stream begins its descent, the sun, which had occasionally favoured us with bright gleams on our way, broke forth in great splendour, and lighted up the broad sheet of water as it cast itself over the first ledge of rocks, and went thundering down the ravine. The luxuriance of the trees on both banks, the high wooded hills at a little distance, which occasionally came in sight, the ragged crags, rocky steps, and rural seats of twisted roots, altogether make this place one of the most enjoyable spots anywhere to be found, and its merits seem thoroughly appreciated by the inhabitants of Dolgelley who make it frequent holiday visits. Every stream in this neighbourhood presents a succession of

waterfalls, and we were afterwards frequently delighted as we drove along the roads to see below us the white foaming torrents between groves of thick trees, and hear the ceaseless murmur of waters which fills the air in all directions.

Nannau Park, or "The Ravines," the scene of old Welsh hospitality for more than half a century in the time of the late proprietor, is said to stand on higher ground than any residence in Wales, a circumstance which probably accounts for the barren and desolate aspect of some of the land in its immediate vicinity, and the comparatively small size of the trees near the house. One, how-

ever, a famous oak, must have been of extraordinary dimensions, to judge by the quantity of articles manufactured from its wood, and by the legend which attaches to it. It grew much lower down in the park, where a fanciful and curious flower-garden is now seen,



and a sun-dial, with an inscription and a brass plate bearing an engraving of the tree, occupies its site. It was called, for a long series of years "Derwen Ceubren yr Ellyll"—The Hollow Oak, the Haunt of Demons; and the following legend attaches to it:

Owen Glendwr, although he is much vaunted by his countrymen, always appears to me to have been selfish, unfeeling, boastful, and treacherous: to have sacrificed his

friends to his interests, and to have sought his own safety at their expense. The popular story connected with this tree is not calculated to raise his character.

Nannau was formerly possessed by a Welsh knight named Howell Sele, who, refusing to take part with Owen Glendwr when he rose to assert his rights against Henry the Fourth, incurred the enmity of the aspirant to the sovereignty of Wales. Glendwr, whose residence was not far from this part of the country, and to whom, indeed, much of the valley which extends from Dolgelley to Llangollen and is called Glendwrddwy, belonged, on one occasion resolved to take

“His pleasure in the woods”

of Howell Sele; and, without seeking permission or caring for opposition, set out accompanied by his friend Madog, and made the glades of Nannau re-echo to the sound of their horns. The unaccustomed blast was heard by Howell, and his anger arose: he armed himself, seized his sword, and, hurrying forth, placed himself in a spot where he knew the intruders must pass. It was not long before the proud Owen and his companion came in sight, and there, beneath an oak of gigantic size, and already hollow with age, although green and flourishing, they saw the frowning chieftain, who asked in a loud and severe voice how Glendwr, a rebel to his king, a disturber of the peace of his country, presumed to enter his grounds and hunt without his leave. A fierce answer was of course returned, and the quarrel

which both sought was soon too deadly to be decided by any other means than the sword.

They fought long and furiously with none to witness the affray but Madog, who stood by. The advantage was with Glendwr, and Howell Sele was slain.

A fearful pause ensued: the master killed in his own woods; his known enemy having been seen on his way to the fatal hunting scene: these facts were too glaring to be concealed, Glendwr's conscience told him he had done amiss, and he dared not stand the brunt of an inquiry. Aided by his friend he took his measures accordingly, and they both rode as swiftly as they could from the scene.

All was desolate in the halls of Nannau; the master had disappeared and was nowhere to be found; the country had been searched far and near but no trace of him was discovered: an infant heir was shown by the weeping mother to his dejected followers, and Howell Sele was mourned for several years and his fate unaccounted for.

The great attempt of Owen Glendwr had failed: Hotspur had fallen at the battle of Shrewsbury, while the chief who was his ally had looked on in safety on the other side of the river. Henry the Fourth and his victorious son were crowned with conquest, and the Welsh prince had found an obscure grave. The Lady of Nannau still wept her lord, but still, with the tenacity of affection she trusted that he might yet return, and her vows at the altar of St. Mary were, that she might yet behold him once more.

One dark November night, when the wind howled fearfully amongst the pine woods which waved gloomily round the deserted mansion and all the household were preparing for repose, a knight urged his steed up the steep mountain road that leads from the brawling torrent of the Mawddach to the heights now enveloped in mist, and, pausing at the portal, sounded the horn which hung at the castle gate. He demanded to see the Lady of Nannau on pressing business which would brook no delay, and was conducted to her presence.

The stranger paused a moment at the threshold, and then said, "Summon all your household, Lady, and let them be witnesses of the words I have to utter. I am Madog, the friend of the unfortunate Prince Owen Glendwr, who slew your husband."

He then went on to relate the circumstances of Howel Sele's death, and bade them search in the hollow of the oak for the body. No time was lost; all hurried to the spot, and there, enclosed in the huge trunk of the tree, was found the skeleton of their master with his armour on, and the sword still grasped in his bony hand.

A magnificent tomb was erected for Howel Sele in the Abbey of Kymmer in the vale below, and perpetual masses instituted for the repose of his soul; but from that time the oak of Nannau, which was standing thirty years since, was well known to be haunted with the evil spirits which that bad deed of Glendwr's had attracted.

Not a vestige of the tomb of Howel Sele now remains, and only a few ruined and degraded walls, and a small window, show where the powerful Cistercian Abbey of Kymmer stood. We paid a visit to the spot where it once flourished, covering a large space of meadow land near the river; but a slovenly farm-yard occupies part, and the remainder is but a small portion of the crumbling wall of what was the church.

The oak was struck by lightning at last and fell, not from age, but by the influence of those fiery spirits which had striven against it for so long, and the event happened on the evening of the very day on which Sir Richard Colt Hoare had made a drawing of the venerable monarch of the forest. This sketch has been repeated in seals, on bowls and cups, on inkstands and pieces of furniture of all sorts, made of the wood of the tree, which has been highly polished and is really ornamental as well as interesting.

The fine dark fir woods of Nannau are very imposing, though the trees are not large; many of the highest points of the numerous elevations in the large park are crowned with enormous blocks of stone which have a Druidical aspect, and from these positions can be seen to great advantage the hundred hills which crowd round the five peaks of the glorious Cader Idris. The late proprietor was very fanciful in the arrangement of his grounds, and there is something original, if not altogether in good taste, in the ornaments he placed there. For instance, a strange gateway rises on the

path which leads to one entrance of the house and excites the wonder of a stranger. It is called Stonehenge, and is conspicuous afar: it is formed of two large pillars of grey unhewn stone with one enormous flat piece thrown across. The latter was, doubtless, part of a Druid temple, for it was brought from the neighbourhood of Harlech, which abounded in cromlechs now sought for there in vain.

At Hengwrt, the residence of the present Sir Robert Vaughan, son of the Baronet of Nannau, is preserved a fine collection of Welsh manuscripts, collected by the celebrated antiquary of that family; but there is now so little interest shown in regard to Welsh history or literature, and it so ill repays laborious research, that probably these papers, got together with infinite pains and cost, will never answer the end for which they were designed. Hengwrt,



where a real Welsh Harp stands in the hall,\* the only instance of the old custom I saw, is in a much more convenient and cheerful situation than Nannau, nor is the house, at the latter place, by any means remarkable for beauty: its size, too, scarcely seems to accord with the accounts of the extraordinary hospitalities exercised there, when the table was always open to all comers, and travellers and strangers, found a home whenever they chose to seek it. Like the mansion of Sir Watkin Williams

\* The instrument is, however, out of repair, and never used.



Wynn near Llangollen, it seems too small for the expansive objects of its master. Nannau, however, is much smaller than Wynnstay, even, as the hospitalities of Sir Robert differed in quality from those of Sir Watkin, the former being of a homely, the other of the most polished description.

The ancient customs of this part of the country are not altogether fallen into disuse, but what remains of them does not induce one to desire their continuance, and one ceases to regret the manners of the good old times when hearing of the coarseness, riot, and inconvenience, which their observance entails.

I was told that on occasion of a marriage in a great family, in the neighbourhood, the servants of the establishment were literally worn out with constant attendance on the country people, who continued for more than three weeks to arrive at the house, with offerings to the bride and bridegroom. These consisted of poultry, eggs, pigs, tea, sugar, and all kinds of eatables, till there was scarcely space left to stow away the hecatombs which came pouring in. Some persons brought pots, pans, dishes, and other household stores, and one peasant woman rode on horseback, from a very great distance, with an offering of pence which it was unmannerly to decline. All this host expected a hospitable reception; and, as every day brought them in tribes, those whom they came to honour found themselves besieged in their dwelling, and unable to obtain

any sort of attendance on themselves. At length the servants, many of whom were English, declared that they could support the fatigue no longer, and peremptory orders were obliged to be issued that no more offerings were to be brought as they would not be received. This gave great offence, for not only is it thought right to overwhelm their superiors by this sort of attention, but a return is duly expected, and some desire of gain is mixed up with this apparent friendliness. This custom, which is practised at weddings in Brittany, is there confined to the lower classes, but in this part of Wales extends to persons of rank, who are much annoyed by the perseverance of the peasantry in keeping it up. The same kind of respect is shown at funerals; but, in those cases, some persons benefit by it, as the clergyman, and all those under him, receive as their due the money given on these occasions. From two pence to two sovereigns were presented at the funeral of Sir Robert Vaughan, and so great a sum collected and so immense a concourse of visitors never were known to occur before in the country.

The young couple, whose marriage gifts were so perplexing, became somewhat unpopular in their neighbourhood, in consequence of their wish to avoid the honour intended them, of being drawn in triumph by an assembly of little less than ten thousand Welsh peasants, from the bridge at the entrance of the town, to their residence at a considerable distance. When it is considered that most of the

zealous welcomers of the bride had been regaling on strong ale for three days, and that scarcely one of the dense mass of shouting individuals was sober, it is not surprising that the bridegroom should resolutely insist on his horses not being taken off, and should drive through the crowd without ceremony, really fearing for the life of her whom all this riot was meant to encourage. . .

Nothing, however, could exceed the rage and mortification of the people, when they found they were prevented from carrying their plan into execution; in revenge, they all hurried, in a body, to the road by which they intended to have dragged the carriage, where all the arches of flowers which they had erected were mercilessly destroyed, the garlands thrown in the dirt, and the voice of welcome changed into contemptuous invective. The first Sunday the pair appeared at church their carriage was pelted, and it was long before the supposed injury was forgiven. This tyranny of affection is certainly far from agreeable, and the sooner such customs are abolished the better.

There are several waterfalls near Dolgelley of great reputation, and though the Welsh falls, in general, are considered insignificant by persons who have travelled in Scotland, without naming, of course, those abroad, yet it is impossible not to accord them the admiration due to Nature, in all her forms, whether of great or small proportions. The Rhaiadr Dû, or Black Cataract, the Rhaiadr y Mawddach, and the Pystill y Cain, are all extremely beautiful, and

placed in most romantic spots. The water, in these falls, is seldom thrown from a height of more than sixty feet, but the Pystill y Cain comes over a rugged, rocky wall, one hundred and fifty feet high. The drive of about seven or eight miles from Dolgelley is extremely agreeable, and the mountains appear in extraordinary splendour. At one point we ascended a very precipitous hill, and, from the top, had a fine double view of Snowdon, and the five-peaked Cader Idris, with a host of lower hills at their feet. From the road it is necessary to walk a considerable distance to arrive at the falls, and the way is steep and rugged in the extreme. The Rhaiadr Dû, often called by the unpronounceable name of the Dôl-y-melynllŷn Fall, is not gained until after a scramble of more than a mile, over rough stones and roots of trees. The water is strangely dispersed by the huge misshapen rocks in the bed of the river, over and through which it dashes with foaming force: it possesses a good deal the same character as the series of cataracts in the Torrent Walk, but on a larger scale. When the season allows of a greater quantity of water the rush must be very fine: but the stream appeared to me, as I saw it, to be overwhelmed with the hugeness of the blocks of stone, which impeded its course. We were much struck with the enormous size of the ants' nests near this fall; they are a yard or more across, and two or three feet high, and very numerous. The two other cataracts are situated in a wood, some miles further, and the walk to

them is long and painful, by a precipitous, stony path, amongst thick shrubs, and over ground so uneven, that it appears as if it had formerly been the bed of a torrent. At length a little rustic bridge is gained, and the immense black gulf, down which the river Cain casts itself murmuring and thundering, presents its awful depth. Nothing can be more wild and grand than this solitary spot. The thick woods spread themselves over the hills which overlap each other; grey and black rocks rise on all sides, and the waters break over their projecting eminences, throwing showers of spray into the air. The principal stream comes down with great force from the topmost height, and battles and contends with the intervening barriers of stones, till it loses itself in the gloomy ravine far below.

After sitting for some time within sound of the roar of this beautiful cataract, we climbed to a hill above, not far off, and again took our stations in the midst of heath-flowers and hare-bells, by the side of the broad and three times interrupted Mawddaeh fall, which does not yield in attraction to its more lofty neighbour.

We found an easier though a much longer road on our return to the spot where our carriage was to meet us through a beautiful young wood filled with wild flowers of every hue, with here and there charming openings disclosing opposite hills, clothed to the very summit with the richest foliage; and we amused ourselves with trying to trace, on

the opposite bank of the river, the route of some of our party, who had joined us on horseback at the falls, and who had delighted us with the account of the extreme beauty of their solitary ride through deep dells and thick shades. Every day new walks, and drives, and rides, may be discovered in the neighbourhood of Dölgeley, and all full of interest, and varied in character. One which particularly pleased us was to a mountain, where a walk of three miles leads entirely round its summit, exhibiting panoramic views of the country of extraordinary beauty. At one side appears the deep valley, with its rushing streams far below winding their course to the distant sea at Barmouth, which seems close at hand with its rugged rocks guarding the approach of the vale; a little further, a prospect opens of an apparently interminable vista of gigantic hills linked together, and disappearing in the blue mists beyond. The great screen of Cader Idris rises from the plains, at the next turn, overpowering, by its size all the lesser mountains, and beneath it spread out mead and grove, and park and wood, while the mansions of the great, and the cottages of the little, are scattered in various directions over this favoured scene of graceful nature.

This route is called the Precipice Walk, it is in the grounds of Nannau, and was arranged by the late Sir Robert Vaughan for the convenience of his adventurous friends; but in many places the path is narrow and rather dangerous, and it excites a somewhat nervous feeling to







find one's-self at the very edge of a dark precipice, at a dizzy height from the valley beneath.

A large clear lake extends between a chain of lower hills, at the top of a mountain near, and the wanderer comes suddenly upon its placid waters with great satisfaction, and rests beside its basin with an agreeable sensation of safety and repose, after the adventure of the Precipice. This is just such a calm, secret, unexpected lake as might be the scene of a fairy tradition related of one of these charming sheets of water in Caermarthenshire, south Wales. I see no reason why the same circumstances should not be attached to this, for it is as much

“ A mirror and a bath ”

for fairies, as any lake one could find.

A young man who was remarkable for his good looks, and who was employed by a farmer, had been sent to a town near his residence to the fair, to purchase some lambs. Having succeeded to his wish, he led the lambs to graze close to Llyn-y-Van-Vach, on the Black Mountains.

Whenever he visited his charge as he sat by the side of the lake, he used to see three lovely female figures hovering about, on its borders: he perceived them distinctly, but their movements were as rapid as those of birds or butterflies, and they almost dazzled his eyes by the quickness of their motions as they skimmed along the waters, their little feet just touching the surface, and then darting off to another part of the lake.

The young man was so fascinated with their appearance, that he loved to sit whole days in the sun, watching them, and at last his desire became extreme to catch and look at them nearer. Accordingly, the next time they appeared, he started up and pursued them round the lake, till he was almost exhausted with his vain efforts, for every time he thought them within his reach, they would flit off to a distance, and he heard a low silver laugh, and caught the taunting words,

“Cras dy fara  
Anhawdd dy ddala,”

which signifies “For him who cateth baked bread, it is difficult to catch us.”

This almost dispirited the young shepherd; but one day, as he was leaning his cheek on his hand, wishing he could hit on some expedient to secure the volatile beauties, he observed some substance like bread floating on the waters. He put forth his crook and drew it to land; it looked like the finest wheaten bread, and it had round it a golden-coloured border, as if it was made of the yellow flour which is sprinkled in the heart of a water-lily: he tasted it and thought he had never eaten anything so delicious: he therefore finished it with great avidity and satisfaction. That day the lovely ladies did not appear, and it was with some apprehension of having offended them, that he came the next morning to the lake: to his great joy, however, he saw the three beauties again, and commenced his chase after them as usual

This time he was successful and caught them all three in his arms, as they stood on the points of some flags at the water's edge. "Now then," exclaimed he, "since I have you, beautiful creatures, you shall not go again till one of you promises to be my wife."

"We are willing," they replied, smiling—"choose the one of us you prefer and then let us go. She shall be your wife, if, when we all three return to-morrow, you can distinguish her from the other two."

This was agreed—he found it somewhat difficult to choose, for each was as perfect in beauty as her sister, but he thought one looked upon him with greater tenderness: this one he observed, had the clasp of the shining sandal that bound her small foot rather differently arranged from those of the others, and as they were about to depart, he entreated her in a whisper to tell him how he should know her again. "I will," said the fair being, "Stand between my sisters, and turn my right foot a little to the right."

The next morning the shepherd was made happy, for the fairies came and he claimed the one who was to be his bride. She left the lake, and her sisters disappeared: as soon as she stood on the ground, she made a signal with her hand, and from the waters came seven cows, one bull, and two oxen. "This is my dower," said she, "I will be your wife and live with you, till you strike me three times, but if that ever happens, I must leave you instantly."

They lived in their farm most happily for several years, and

the lovely lady brought him three sons—the celebrated Meddygon Myddvai, great physicians and learned men—but while they were yet children, the shepherd was one day preparing to attend a fair in the neighbourhood, and told his wife to go to the field and fetch his horse. She said she would, but being rather dilatory, he playfully reproached her saying, “Dôs, dôs, dôs,” or Go, go, go, and as he did so, he tapped her three times unwittingly with the glove he held in his hand.

She fled instantly, and he heard her voice summoning her cattle to follow her. The oxen were then ploughing the field, but they obeyed her call, and carried off the plough with them. The furrow from the field in which they were ploughing, extends to the margin of the lake, and may be traced there at the present day.

After her departure she met her three sons in a cwm, (hollow) and delivered to each of them a bag, containing something very mysterious, but the use of which she taught them: this it was that gave them the power of healing all diseases, and which made them afterwards so famous in their day.

## CHAPTER X.

Tal-y-Llyn. — Rocks. — Llyn-tri-Gracaen. — Llyn Mwyngel. — Gwyllaid Cochion Mowddwy. — Outrage. — Banditti. Quarrels. — Henry Seventh. — Machynllith. — Wife's Advice. — Bala Lake. — The Fox's Path. — The Vale of Corwen. — Llangollen. — The many-named Saint. — Language. — Meetings of Aid. — The Posy. — Fairies. — The Ladies of Llangollen. — The Portraits. — Eglwyseg Mountains. — Valle Crucis. — Pillar of Eliseg. — Dinas Brân. — Young Fairies. — Canal. — Aqueduct. — Harp. — The Bard's Lament to Myfanwy Fechan.



FROM Dolgelley the drive for many miles is extremely pretty, the country rich, and the hills covered with wood; but on approaching the foot of the great mountain of Cader Idris, the scene becomes rough and wild, the rocks grow ragged, and their shapes grotesque, and at every step, in the great gorge which leads to Tal-y-Llyn, the gloomy horrors of a savage pass increase. The sterile heights stoop over the valley, until they almost meet; the road runs along a steep which hangs above a torrent-stream brawling and winding below. All kinds of fanciful shapes appear on the eminences, some of which have been named according to the passing thought of the observer. Queen Victoria's head is supposed to rise above the rest, and near her is a rock

Pen-y-delyn, from its resemblance to a harp. A little further on is Llam-y-lladron, or the Robber's Leap; for from hence it is said to have been in early days the custom to cast offenders. Here and there a mountain rivulet, as if in emulation, throws itself off the top of the rocks, and trickles down the rugged sides, forming in the winter no inconsiderable cascade.

By a small lake called Llyn-tri-Graeanen, or "the Pool of the Three Pebbles," lie a few scattered blocks of stone, which are said to be those the giant Cader threw out of his shoes when he found himself incommoded in his walk on the mountain; they rolled down into this valley, and remain to attest the size which his seven-leagued boots must have been to be able to contain pebbles of such magnitude. This scene is more like a pass in the Pyrenees than any I had beheld in Wales, and struck me as remarkably grand: on descending a very precipitous road suddenly, the placid waters of the romantic Tal-y-Llyn burst upon the view. The lake is as secluded and as solemn in the aspect of the surrounding country as Lake Ogwen itself, and spreads across the vale to a breadth of not more than half a mile, extending about two miles in length. It is entirely hemmed in with lofty grey rocks whose feet are bathed by its waters, and presents an effect full of grandeur and sublimity.

There are numerous lakes in this vicinity well known to anglers, several of which fraternity we deposited from the coach in which we travelled at a solitary little inn in the quiet village,

and I was assured by one, that nothing could exceed the beauty of the scenery round, particularly near the church, which is placed at the head of a fair lake, called appropriately, Llyn Mwyngil, or, of the Charming Retreat. Secluded and lovely as it may be in the summer, the change must be fearful in the lonely winter months amidst these gorges and chasms, and the duty of the clergyman of the parish of Tal-y-Llyn, which is very large, must be painful and hazardous in the extreme.

This is a very wild part of Merionethshire, and was, as may well be imagined, the frequent scene of violence in unsettled times. Not only did Owen Glendwr make it one of his strongholds, but every glen for many miles round was infested with robbers in much later times. Fearful stories are told of the outrages of a band called Gwylliaid y Dugod, or the Banditti of the Black Wood, otherwise Gwylliaid Cochion Mowddwy, the Red-headed Robbers of Mowddwy, whose abodes were scattered about from this neighbourhood to that of Dinas Mowddwy in the rocks of Craig-y-Dinas, on the river Cerrist, where three vales meet. Some of the chiefs of this fearful and powerful band were said to belong to good families, and more than one boasted of being 'the master of eighty hearths.'

Several were induced by the oppression of their English rulers to join the desperate men who kept the country in such continual alarm, that the farmers were in the habit not only of guarding their property in every kind of way, but of

placing scythes in their chimneys to prevent their descending into the houses by that means. Several proprietors of estates were suspected of belonging to the Gwylliaid, and one large farm is still pointed out as having been the abode of a powerful chief of the gang. It is called Dugoed Mawr. Another farm called Dugoed Issa belonged to a relation of this chief, who refused to join the confederacy, and after the dispersion of the robbers, this last was the only portion of the land which was not confiscated.

Disbanded soldiers who had been engaged in the wars of the Roses, outlawed men, and all who were discontented, ranged themselves in the ranks of these desperate characters, and in 1554, they had become so powerful, that the country groaned under their tyranny.

A fatal event, no less than the murder of the Vice-Chamberlain of North Wales, caused government at last to take such vigorous measures, that the band were exterminated for ever.

The circumstances were these:—John Wynne ap Meredith of Gwydir, and Lewis Owen, Vice Chamberlain and Baron of the Exchequer, had raised a company to root out this pest, and had taken no less than a hundred of the band, who were hung on the spot. The mother of one of the robbers entreated vehemently for the life of her son, which was refused, and she then took a fearful oath, that his death should be avenged, and her friends ‘wash their hands in the blood of the cruel judge.’



Some time after the Baron and a kinsman of his, John Lloyd, of Ceiswyn in the parish of Tal-y-Llyn, were travelling through a deep wood near one of the rocky passes of this part of the country, when they found their course impeded by several huge trees, which had been cut down and placed across the road.' While the attendants were endeavouring to remove these obstacles, a signal was heard, and in an instant they found themselves surrounded and fiercely attacked by the band of the Cochion Mowddwy. A desperate encounter ensued, but the party of the Baron could not contend with the numbers of the banditti, and were all killed, together with the magistrate himself, whom they butchered in the most horrible manner, and some of them who were relations of the old woman who had vainly entreated for her son, actually fulfilled her threat. Lloyd of Ceiswyn escaped through the interposition of one of the ruffians, whom he had lately patronised and done an act of kindness to, for in a rural meeting he had given him the prize for swift running, little conceiving that under his simple guise of a peasant of the valley, one of the dreaded Gwylliaid was concealed. The man's gratified vanity or gratitude induced him thus to interfere to save Lloyd's life.

This outrage roused the vengeance of the country, and the resolute efforts of the military soon put a stop to similar acts, so that in a very short space no more was heard of the redoubted Robbers of the Black Wood. Even yet, it is said, that in some old farm-houses scythes are to be found in the

chimneys, which had been allowed to remain there in memory of these events.

The state of Wales was, about this period, and for some time previous, appalling to contemplate: every gentleman seemed emulous of enacting deeds similar to the acknowledged robbers who scoured the country, and scarcely one neighbour but was at war with another. Sir John Wynne of Gwydir, relates in his history, that an uncle of his own durst never go to church from his house of Pen-nan-maen without leaving it guarded, the doors barred and bolted, and “a watchman standing at the Garreg rock during service, to raise the cry if the house was attacked. He durst not, though he were guarded by twenty tall archers, make known when he went to church or elsewhere, or go or come the same way through the woods or narrow places, lest he should be *layed for*.”

Sir John adds, that “this nation was never in quiet till Henry the Seventh came to the crown, and Henry the Eighth granted them all their privileges some time after.” Meredith ap Ivan, the same ancestor of whom Sir John speaks, was accustomed to say that he removed from his house of Eifionydd, for if he remained there he must either kill his own kinsmen or be killed by them, “for Nafŷ Conway was, at this time,” adds he, “filled with banditti, and all the gentlemen were at feud.” This resolute personage, however, reformed the country in a great measure: “he got together seven score tall bowmen, every one arrayed in a jacket or armolet coat, a good steel cap, short sword and dagger, and

bows and arrows ; many of them had horses and *chasing slaves*, which were ready to answer the cry on all occasions."

Meredith had removed the church, which stood in a secluded spot, to a more open position for security, and yet he was obliged, before he could visit it, to take all the precautions named. The robber chief, who had gained himself the greatest name in this neighbourhood, was called Hoel ap Evan ap Rys Gethen, and was one of those who seemed proud of his ancestral honours, and gloried to proclaim his descent.

When Meredith died in 1525, he left no less than twenty-three legitimate and three natural children, but whether any of them showed his courage and resolution to extirpate the robber bands is not recorded.

The famous castle of Dolydd Helen, on a high rock, amidst the Snowdon valleys, once the residence of Jorwerth the father of the great Llywelyn, was a stronghold of outlaws and robbers, and the terror of the country.

It seems that gentlemen of Wales would quarrel with their neighbours "for a good morrow;" and the merest trifle became the foundation of a serious dispute which ended always in blood.

After quitting Tal-y-Llyn, the road ascends a very steep hill, and a magnificent prospect of the mountain passes and the lake is afforded: nothing remarkable after this attracts the attention till the town of Machynlleth is gained. This is rather an imposing looking place, some of the public buildings being handsome, the principal inn very large, and the

houses in the main street less ruinous than is usual: the greatest part of it seems to have been newly built, and, after the irregular streets of Dolgelley, it certainly shows to advantage. There seems little antiquity left, but it is a place devoted to the memory of Owén Glendwr, who here summoned his friends and followers, and caused himself to be proclaimed and crowned Prince of Wales. An old archway is still shown as having formed part of the senate house from whence Owen issued his first mandates as sovereign. It was here that Sir David Gam attended with the rest, as a friend, but with a view to the betrayal of the prince to his employer Henry the Fourth: his plot was, however, discovered—his house burnt, his goods confiscated, and his life only saved by the intercession of friends, who thought it impolitic to carry vengeance so far at that moment: he was kept a prisoner at Machynlleth for some time, in expiation of his intended treachery, but contrived to escape and was well received in England.

A story is told of Henry the Seventh connected with this neighbourhood. It is said that, before his fortunes were so brilliant as they afterwards became, Henry slept at the house of his adherent David Lloyd, at Mathafarn, near Machynlleth, and as David was esteemed a seer, the prince requested him to exercise his art in order that he might know what would be the result of the approaching conflict which he was preparing with Richard the Third. Lloyd promised to gratify him on the morrow, and passed a sleepless night vainly interrogating

the stars and his books—all was blank and not an intimation could he obtain as to the issue, fraught with so much importance to his friend's cause. Exhausted and dispirited, his wife found him next morning, with pallid cheek and haggard aspect, and inquired the cause of his evident dejection. He communicated to her the predicament in which he was placed, but she treated the matter lightly, exclaiming "Can you hesitate what to reply? tell him, of course, that he will succeed; if he does you gain honour; if not, he will not return to reproach you."

The seer took her advice, and a Welsh proverb is said to have arisen from the circumstance.

"Cynghar gwraig heb ei ofyn,"—*i. e.*

"A wife's advice without asking it."

After quitting Aberystwith, a pleasant bathing place where we had resided some time, our route lay towards Llangollen: we therefore returned to Dolgelley, and from thence continued our journey.

The country between Dolgelley and Bala is even finer than on the other side, and the majestic mountain of Cader Idris is still more imposing, seen in this direction. The hills are covered with trees from the water's edge to their summits, and the foaming, restless river winds its murmuring way between the thickly clothed banks, gleaming and sparkling in the sun in the most animated manner. This luxuriant landscape keeps improving at every step, and leaves the traveller

in doubt whether this enchanting vale is not superior to any he has yet seen in Wales. Llyn Tegid, or Pimblemere, is the name by which the Lake of Bala is known : it is a fine sheet of water, by far the largest of any in the Principality. The first view of it is obtained near the romantic parish church of Llanycil,



about a mile from the town, and the road runs along a high bank above the lake for several miles, showing it in great perfection. The river Dee increases its waters at the head, and two other streams run into the expanse and are lost there—the Dee, however, has the reputation of keeping its tide entirely unmixed, as it flows through the liquid plain, and emerges at the opposite end. Some persons can even discern the separated stream in its course, though an experienced fisher vehemently assured me there was no truth in this legend of the wizard Dee's exclusiveness.

No sooner has Cader Idris, the giant of Merionethshire,



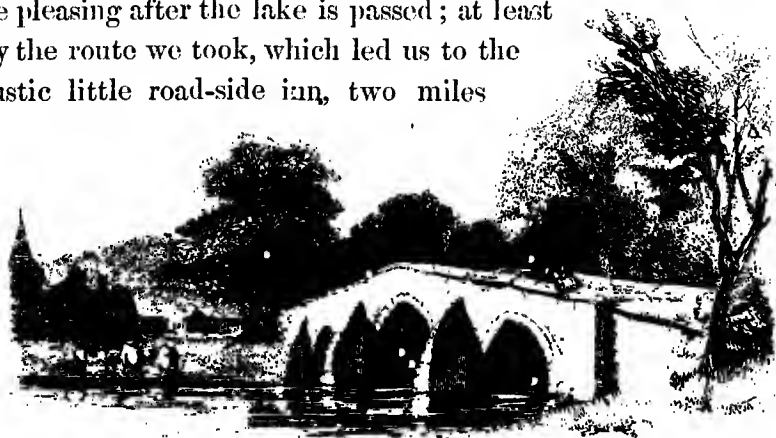




faded into distance, than rivals arise in the form of the beautifully shaped hills of Aran Fowddry, and the graceful Arreneg Vawr, whose shadow lies on the silver Lake of Bala, and whose protecting screen guards it on the north-west. This latter mountain has a charming effect, and is no less worthy of admiration than its great neighbour. We were entertained on our journey by the rapturous description of a young traveller, who had the day before ascended Cader Idris, and been fortunate in one of the clearest days known, not only that summer, but for several years. He described the view from the utmost height to be inexpressibly magnificent, and the whole of the centre of Wales to have been spread out below him in luminous perspective; every mountain and valley, every town and lake, as evident as if close at hand. From Snowdon to Plinlimmon, all is described on such an occasion, and it is one of the most satisfactory of mountains to ascend, as it discloses nothing but beauties, and even when the atmosphere is less clear than it happened to be at the happy moment in question, it can exhibit scenery nowhere else to be beheld. One path, occasionally chosen by the venturous, merely from its great difficulty and the glory of surmounting danger, is called the Fox's Path, and our young companion was suddenly silenced in the glowing account of his adventures, by a jealous old man volunteering a description of the superior beauty of the side of the mountain seen from this perilous point, which he declared he always chose by preference, not considering the ascent or descent worth

naming, if not accomplished in this manner. The travellers disputed violently, and finally both sunk into sullen silence, each mortified at being outdone by the other, for the younger could boast of having accomplished the ascent of Cader Idris only yesterday, and the elder of having, some time since, climbed up the Fox's path on all fours, and returned with his head downwards. To their respective admiring friends, they would, no doubt, be equally heroes, but they could neither endure a successful rival. "

The town of Bala is quite uninteresting, no better than is usually met with in North Wales, and the scenery ceases to be pleasing after the lake is passed; at least by the route we took, which led us to the rustic little road-side inn, two miles



from Corwen, called the Druid, where we stopped for the night.

I am told by the other road there is much more beauty, and that going by Llandrillo, the fine vale of Edeyrnion is seen, whose reputation is as charming as any in Wales.

Côrwen is prettily situated, close to the Berwyn mountains, on the banks of the Dee, and is the very head quarters of Owen Glendwr, to whom the whole of this vale belonged, and whose mansions, or rather the sites of them, are pointed out every here and there.

The principal inn has his head for a sign, and his name is by no means forgotten here. A clump of fir-trees marks the spot where stood his palace, which is described as magnificent in sculptured wood and marble, and extremely extensive and splendid. His 'seat,' pompously described by his bard, is on the neighbouring mountains from whence he could gaze over more than forty miles of his own land.

I fear the dagger, and knife and fork of this redoubted chief, which once were shown in this part of the world have disappeared; they were formerly exhibited at Rhûg, then the seat of a gentleman no longer a resident in this country.

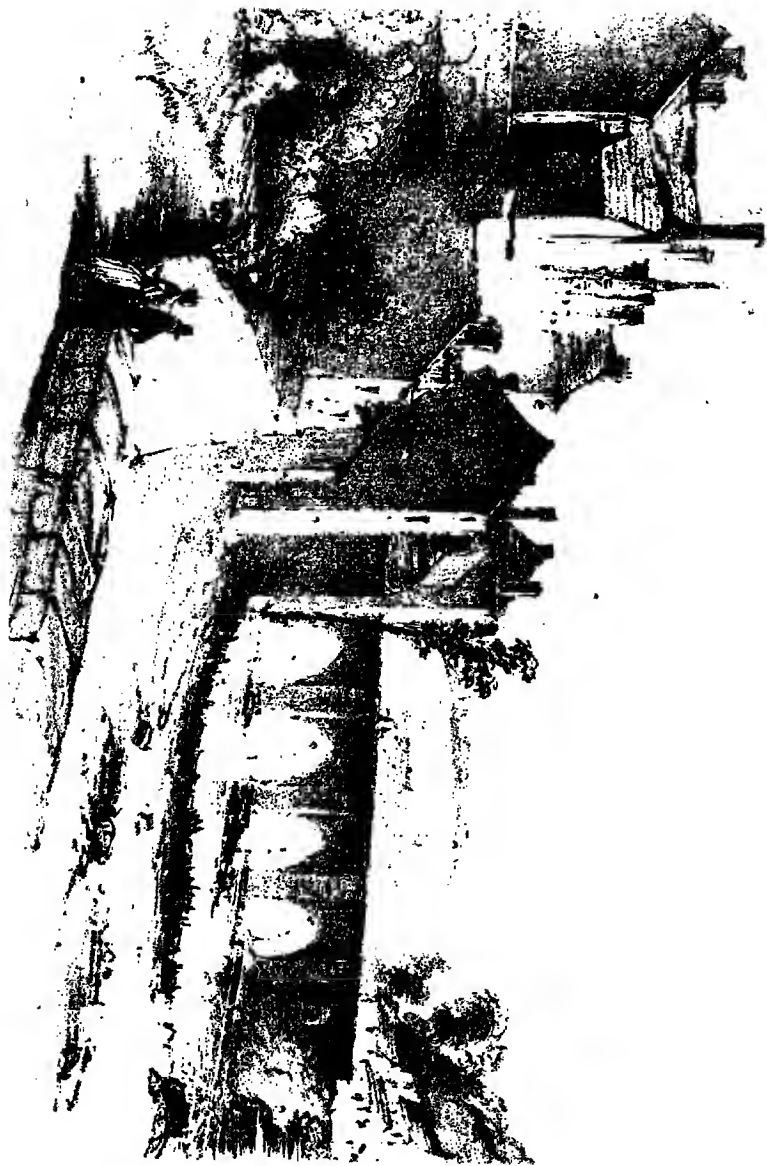
Owen Glendwr, had he been a wise man, would have contented himself with all he could call his own, in the view from his exalted 'seat,' for a more lovely valley than that which extends from Corwen to Llangollen, never was beheld. It is all beauty and grace, and of a more cultivated and refined nature, than the valleys in the wilder parts of North Wales, gaining in beauty what it loses in sublimity, and leaving the admirer of nature nothing to regret in the absence of the more gigantic and rugged mountains he has left behind.

At length the winding Dee, climbing and struggling

along the rocky bed which almost overpowers its stream, passes under an antique bridge and discloses the town of Llangollen, guarded and fenced by many a high hill, amongst which is most conspicuous the height of Dinas Brân, on the very pinnacle of which stand, as if suspended in air, the venerable ruins of that famous castle which has been for centuries the theme of the poet, and the admiration of the painter.

Llangollen is, in itself, as miserable a village as any of the towns I have described in Wales; but it is surrounded, as many of them are, with scenery of exquisite beauty, and there are numerous pleasant dwellings scattered about on the heights, and along the charming vale. The Dee is here, however, but a shallow stream, except in winter, when it fills its rocky bed and rolls majestically through the country, sometimes so overflowed by the water of Bala Lake as to cause, by its impetuosity, frightful ravages on its banks: the bridge of Llangollen, though much talked of, is not picturesque; but it is very ancient, being built as early as the middle of the fourteenth century.\* The church is also of considerable antiquity, but has very little left of architectural beauty; some fine carving, on the roof and other parts of the interior, still attests its former consequence; but there are no tombs nor stones bearing record of any remarkable personage, although it is dedicated

\* By John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, and used to take its place among the Tri Thlws Cymri, or Three Beauties of Wales.





to a saint with a particularly long lineage, and a legend worthy of it. He was called St. Collen ap Gwynnawg ap Clydawg ap Cowrda ap Caradog Freichfras ap Llyr Merim ap Einion Yrth ap Cuneddedd ap Wledig; and this illustrious character was buried under its sacred roof.

Difficult is it for a Saxon tongue to pronounce such names! and very necessary was it for the Welsh, in petitioning Henry the Eighth, to propitiate him by flattery, otherwise he would scarcely have been able to restrain his choler in looking at the crabbed lines offered to his view, when his Cambrian subjects were entreating for their rights; not that any Welsh person is disposed to agree in decrying their ancient tongue which is, by some, considered as that spoken by Adam and Eve in Paradise. "As for our language," say the King's petitioners, "though it seem harsh, it is yet that which was spoken anciently, not only in this island but in France, some dialects whereof remain still among the Bas Bretons there, and here in Cornwall: nor shall it be a disparagement, we hope, that it is spoken in the throat, since the Florentine and Spaniard affect this kind of pronunciation, as believing words that sound so deep proceed from the heart."

However unmusical the language may be, it is, like many North American Indian dialects, expressive as to the names of places; and uncouth as the words look when written, and coarse as is the sound when spoken, they sometimes tell a history in little. There are even, a few which

are comparatively pleasing: I cannot, however, agréé in thinking those words composed of vowels alone to be admired, though they are often brought forward by the Welsh to prove the melody of the ancient tongue, which, like the Basques of theirs, they insist is the original root of all the languages in Europe; nor do they stop here, but, bold as the Escuara, they protest that the British is older than Hebrew or Arabic, both of which are derived from it. Several words, having resemblance to the Hebrew are brought forward in proof of this; amongst them are

Ellyly (pronounced Ethlithly) which is not unlike *Elil* in Hebrew, an idol.  
 Amynedd (pronounced amuneth), similar to the Hebrew amunath, constancy.

Maer, a lord; in Hebrew, Mar;

Newidd, a place; in Hebrew, Nevath;

Aber, a ford; in Hebrew, Heber;

and many others.

There is one very strange Welsh word which goes far to prove some Eastern connexion; it is, however, somewhat startling if traced too closely—this is *Tagu*—which in Welsh signifies *to strangle*—and is most unfortunately like *thugee*. It is to be hoped that our ancestors did not indulge in the practices of the Thugs, though it seems ascertained that they were *cannibals*\* once upon a time, and

\* It is recorded that a certain prince of Britain, named Gwrgi Garwlwyd was a cannibal, and that he acquired the taste for man's flesh at the court of Edelfled, King of the Saxons, whose sister he married. He had a particular



it is known, that before the laws were repealed by Howel Dha, "three sorts of people might be killed in Wales with impunity—a madman, a stranger, and a leper."

It was in the beautiful valley of Corwen that the famous bard and warrior, Llywarch Hael, had to deplore the loss of one of his twenty-four sons, who all wore golden chains, and were all slain in battle, fighting against the Saxons. Whether it is the ghost of this youngest warrior which was reported to appear in a field near Llangollen is not ascertained, but a curious circumstance was related to me here, of an ancient golden cuirass having been found, not long since, in the very field where a ghost in golden armour had long been said to walk.

I do not know whether the ancient meetings, called "Meetings of Aid," formerly usual in Llangollen, are now superseded, but it was once the custom here for the benevolent to meet, at certain times, to consult about giving work to the poor. On these occasions it was expected that the women should receive some token from their admirers, indicative of their sentiments. Sometimes offerings were made

passion for making his meal of little Cymri boys ever after; his name signifies "*rough brown dog-man*."

Edelfled was in the habit of eating two noble maidens of the Cymri every morning for breakfast, and Gwrgi, on his return from the fashionable court of the Saxon king, found it impossible to exist without his table was supplied every day with a male and female of the Welsh nation: he was, however, considerate in his cruelty, for on a Saturday he killed two of each, that he might not be obliged to kill on Sunday.

of silver spoons, cakes, and other trifles, decorated with ribbons and flowers; but if a lover wished to hint that he had changed his mind, and no longer cared to continue on terms of intimacy with the female he had chosen, he had only to add a sprig of *colleen*, or hazle, and it was at once known that he was not ambitious of the character of a constant swain.

There was a personage, called the Caisar, who answers to the Basvalan of the Bretons, and who, dressed in gay attire, distributed the presents to each; he took the female aside and presented the *pwysi* or posy, and, having named the sender, retired. The *bedw*,\* or birch, was a good omen with lovers, and, on May morning, a nosegay containing a sprig of birch was always left by a true lover, where it was sure to be found by the “dame de ses pensées.”

Fairies used to be busy in the valley,

“But now may no man see none elves mo!”

The housewife had only, before retiring to repose, to make her hearth very clean, sweep the floor, and fill the pails with water, and the fairies were sure to come at midnight, dance and revel till day-break, and then singing the well known air of *Toriad-y-Dydd* or *The Dawn*, disappear, leaving a piece of money on the hob. They were called ‘*Tylwyth Têg*,’ or *The*

\* It is rather singular that the Arabic word *bedouh* is, in the East, frequently inscribed, as a charm, on sabres, seals, &c., and is supposed to possess great virtue.

Fair Family, and in North Wales were not considered diminutive as in England.

One of the great attractions of Llangollen a few years ago was the romantic story attached to the place and the residence there of Lady Elinor Butler and Miss Ponsonby. Pilgrimages were made to this shrine of friendship, and the ladies were overwhelmed with visitors, and their cottage filled with offerings. Their tomb is now in the churchyard, and their cottage let; and very few persons recollect much about them, or feel any interest in a sentimental history, which belonged to the last century, and now can only excite a smile at the eccentricity of its heroines, who, under pretence of retiring from society, made themselves conspicuous throughout the country. Most of their accumulated stores were sold by public auction, on the death of the last of the friends, and the cottage, as it now stands, is by no means either a rural or picturesque object. It is covered inside and out with carved wood, some of value, and some quite worthless; and all that remains of the taste of the former proprietors merely proves how little was required to please fifty years ago. The trees, planted by the friends, are now grown high, and shut out all view of the country; in fact, the whole place has a vulgar, common-place appearance, and excited in my mind no sort of interest, nor was my indifference agreeably dispelled by the view of an engraving, hung up in the little boudoir, representing the two ladies sitting at their table covered with curiosities, both dressed in mas-

culine habits, and both frightfully ugly. These portraits, it seems, were taken by an amateur, by stealth, as neither of 'The Ladies of Llangollen' would consent to sit, and a lamentable record is it which creates most unpleasing sensations to the lover of the graceful, beautiful, and venerable.

The 'ladies' were, although singular in the extreme, remarkably charitable and considerate of the necessities of their neighbours, and their loss has been greatly felt. They seemed vain and pompous, but accomplished and intellectual, and were a strange compound of wisdom and folly, pride and condescension.

A remarkable feature in the landscape round Llangollen is the range of limestone rocks, called Eglwysig, which form on the north-eastern side a singular background to the cultivated hills covered with grass or trees. These rocks are very bold and grand, and their forms resemble in many places huge round towers and bastions, and appear like a guarded wall running across the country. The contrast they present to every other part of the scene is very curious, and sometimes when their huge front is lighted up by the sun the effect is extremely imposing. This range of rocks has been supposed to derive its name from a stone called Eliseg's Pillar, which stands in Valle Crucis; but some late antiquaries insist that they are so designated from a church which formerly stood in a meadow at their foot, and which is still known as "The Meadow of the Church." Some insist that Craig Eglwysig means the *hallowed rock*: the significa-

tion of the name is a subject which has much engaged the attention of antiquarians, as well as the true reason why the valley, where stand the fine ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey, is so called. This exquisite relic of a past age is finely situated in a secluded spot surrounded with hills and embowered in trees. Its east and west ends, and the south transept, are tolerably perfect, and numerous delicate pillars with gracefully ornamented capitals are scattered in beautiful irregularity over the ground. The branches of several fine ash trees bend over the ruined arches, and ivy, not too luxuriant to conceal the beauties it adorns, climbs amongst the clustered columns making them still more charming to look on. One fine circular arch is filled with three delicate lancet windows each surmounted with a rose, the tracery of which is still preserved. So frail appears the wall which supports them, that one fears the gales of winter will not spare them long, even in the sheltered position which they occupy. There is still a great deal left of the abbey, and some parts are singularly strong and firm, defying time and the elements. In a farm-house adjoining are several chambers which formed part of the convent, and numerous fine doors and windows are there to be seen. Valle Crucis Abbey was founded in 1200, by Madoc ap Griffith Madoc, lord of the neighbouring castle of Dinas Brân, who was buried here, after a life of rapine and violence, which he hoped would be expiated by the piety he showed in spending large sums of money on this beautiful structure.

Not far from the abbey is a field, called *Llwyn y Groes*, or the Grove of the Cross, and here stands the famous pillar, which being looked upon as a cross, is supposed to have given name to the valley. It is, however, not likely to have been a cross, but merely a pillar believed to have been erected in memory of *Eliseg*, a warrior, who fell at the battle of Chester, in the year 607. It is one of the most ancient lettered stones known, but the inscription is so much defaced as to render its meaning a mystery to the learned, though a considerable portion has been deciphered, and excited great curiosity. It was broken and thrown down during the civil wars, but did not sustain so much injury as to prevent its fragments being collected and the pillar re-edified. It stands on a mound, near the road, in a field where there is an aged trunk of a tree, of singular form, looking like the withered Dryad who still lingers on the spot to guard her treasure. The present height of the column is about eight feet, of a cylindrical form, and from six to seven feet in circumference, being thickest towards the base. It stands on a pedestal five feet square, and this is worn in two places, as if by the knees of devotees, but the circumstance may, nevertheless, be accidental. The form at the top is by no means that of a cross: it has a round band resembling a cord, arranged as if in drapery round an altar, with a ring in each compartment: part of it is either broken or worn away, but the form is very clearly defined. It is a very picturesque object as it stands, lonely and myste-

rious, in its meadow, with encircling hills, keeping its secret and mocking the inquirers of the wise of the earth. Considering the great antiquity of Eliseg's Pillar, I should think it reasonable to suppose it gave name to the remarkable range of rocks in its vicinity; but whether it is not a relic of some Pagan worship remains to be discovered.

The son of Eliseg is said to have been a Prince of Powis, who dwelt in the castle of Dinas Brân at that period. There is little doubt that this fortress is of British origin, and strange and wonderful is its position on an almost inaccessible hill, which even now it requires considerable resolution to ascend. It is a most striking and remarkable object throughout the valley: its few crowning dark walls, surmounting the steep acclivity, and appearing at every turn as if it were placed there expressly as a spy upon all comers, as indeed the castle must effectually have been. Its chiefs were, for several ages, turbulent banditti, always at war with their neighbours, and keeping constant watch, either to prevent inroads on their own property; or with a view of seizing the lucky moment to pounce down, like falcons, on their prey.

Here, in 1270, lived Griffith ap Madoc, who traitorously betrayed his country to Henry the Third of England, and here he died of grief and shame, kept prisoner in his own castle, by his indignant subjects. He had loved and sacrificed his honour to gain Emma, the beautiful daughter of James, Lord Audley. At his death he left four chil-

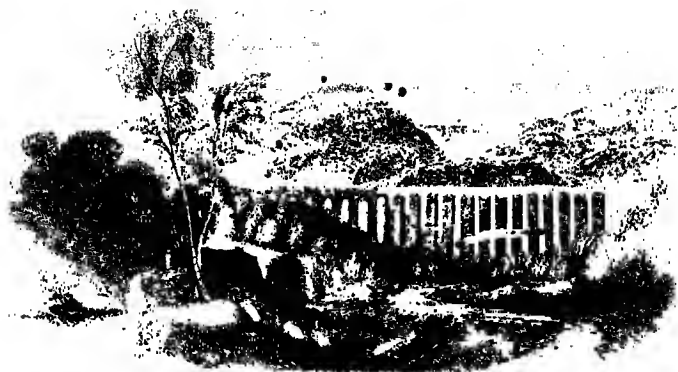
dren, the guardianship of whom was given by Edward the First to two lords of his court, who took such effectual care of two of his infant sons, that they never appeared to disturb the peace of England. There are two young fairies, who are said to haunt the old bridge of Holt, and who appear with wet garments weeping and wailing. The Earl of Warren and the Lord of Wigmore dared not pass that bridge at midnight, for a cause which they could alone explain. The King rewarded them for their care of the Welsh princes, by bestowing on one the Castle of Chirk, and on the other, that of Dinas Brân.

The late remorse of Earl Warren occasioned the restoration of some part of his property to the third son of the unfortunate Griffith, who held his land under the King of England, and was called Y Baron-gwyn, or the White Baron. He had a son called Madog-grupl, or the Cripple, and this personage was great grandfather to Owen Glendwr, who succeeded to the estates of the family in the valley of Corwen.

The term Dinas or Dines, signifies a fence on commanding ground, and certainly this castle deserves its name. It is said that, in former days, the low grounds bordering on these heights were often infested with ravenous beasts, as the names retained in some parts of the country still record. Cors y Wiber, or the Serpent's Den; Cors y Bleiddian, the Wolf's Den; and Bod-lei, the Abode of the Lion, tell fearful tales; but the beautiful vale of Llangollen



gives but little fear of encountering such horrible creatures now, for all is peace and security by the side of the rocky Dee, or on the margin of the most picturesque of canals—a canal whose course we followed in a boat, for many miles of extreme beauty, across the stupendous aqueduct called



Pont Cysylltau which spans the Vale of Dee, nearly to the pretty village of Chirk, whence we entered the charming park of Bryn Kinallt, and visited the most beautiful of the seats in the neighbourhood.

This canal runs through a lovely country, and its banks afford the most agreeable walks: it is a favourite promenade, and is a great advantage to the vicinity of the town: the river's margin being in general too rugged to allow of straying by it; but there, perched on the rocks, may patient fishers oft be seen for hours watching, with strange perseverance, to catch the *fabled* trout which tradition as-

serts is abundant in the Welsh rivers, a supposed 'fact which experience, at least ours, denies!

There is scarcely a walk near Llangollen, whence the dark ruins of the feudal castle may not be seen frowning from their height, and everywhere they have a solemn and imposing aspect, till at length the sojourner at Llangollen is accustomed to turn his eyes mechanically towards the isolated hill, and pay his first devoirs to Dinas Brân, disappointed if a projecting crag or wood hides the dark chief of the valley from his view.

We remained for some time lingering in this charming neighbourhood, unwilling to quit the last spot of Welsh ground, and every day its beauties, which do not strike the stranger so vividly at first, in comparison with other vales, became more endearing.

The only harp we heard in Wales, throughout our route, was at Llangollen, at the inn where we stopped; but most of the airs played by the smart young man who officiated, were English songs or quadrilles, diversified with a few common Welsh tunes, with Jenny Jones at their head. It is vain now to expect even a remnant of romance in Wales, and certainly the continued din of a very bad instrument, whose sounds began in the hall of the hotel before breakfast, and were continued almost the whole day, made us hasten from the spot with an earnest hope of encountering no more Welsh music of that description, for it could be considered in no other light than as a nuisance. Vain would it

have been to ask the harper to sing for us the ancient lay once breathed beneath the walls of Castell Dinas Brân, when the woes of the bard, Howel ap Eithion Llygliw were recounted, as he celebrated the charms of the high-born maiden, Myfanwy Fechan, the daughter of the lord of the country, who flourished there in 1390, and “walked in beauty,” along these flowery valleys, charming every eye, but most that of her tender minstrel, who thus pours forth her praises and his passions.

THE BARD'S LAMENT TO THE BEAUTIFUL MYFANWY.

Oh, fair Myfanwy ! it is long  
 Since sleep descended on thy eyes,  
 For thee all night awakes my song,  
 For thee all day my notes arise.

To sing in golden verse thy praise  
 Is all the joy thy lover knows ;  
 To perish by his sweetest lays  
 Is all the meed thy pride bestows.

Oh ! I have found the truth too plain,  
 And live alone its force to prove,  
 Wisdom and sense are given in vain,  
 To guard against the wiles of love.

The winds around thy towers may rave,  
 But there I roam thy form to see,  
 As brilliant as the dangerous wave  
 That murmurs o'er Caswennon's sea.\*

\* A spot where one of King Arthur's ships was wrecked.

Like Tristan, pensive and alone,  
 I wander near thy turrets high,  
 But, ah! no Yscult's\* gentle tone  
 Will to my wailing voice reply.

My steed, impatient, paws the ground,  
 He has no path but where thou art,  
 He looks with restless glance around  
 And waits my signal to depart.

My song shall tell the world how bright  
 Is she who robes my soul of rest,  
 As fair her face, all smiles and light,  
 As snow new fall'n on Aran's crest.

Oh say, are praises such as mine  
 Unworthy of one tender word?—  
 Canst thou condemn an art divine,  
 Nor one reviving hope accord?

Thou lovely flow'r of Trevor's tree,  
 Sweeter than blossoms of the Spring,  
 Thy palace is a tomb for me,  
 In vain I gaze, in vain I sing.

And yet I idly wake the string,  
 And sing thy beauty all my days,  
 And liken thee to everything  
 That Nature in her wealth displays.

Thou shinest brighter than the grass  
 Silver'd with webs that insects weave,  
 Or like the ocean's crystal glass  
 Where all the stars their spangles leave.

\* Tristan and Yscult the immortal lovers of the romances of old.

In scarlet robes, with queenly gait  
Thou com'st, and all before thee kneel,—  
I see thee and accuse my Fate  
New torments and new love I feel.

Yet, little care by thee is shown  
To lays that others prize as dear ;  
•By all besides my fame is known,  
All others flock my harp to hear.

Oh ! bid me sing—as well I can—  
Nor scorn my melody as vain—  
Or 'neath the walls of Dinas Brân  
Behold me perish in my pain !



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